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Mrs Henry Wood

3 vols

ANNE HERFORD.



VOL. I.

ANNE HEREFORD.

A Novel.

BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF

"EAST LYNNE," "THE RED COURT FARM,"
ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ANNE HEREFORD.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. EDWIN BARLEY.

AN express train was dashing along a line of rails in the heart of England. On one of the first-class carriages there had been a board, bearing the intimation "For Ladies Only," but the guard took it off when the train first started. It had come many miles since. Seated inside, the only passenger in that compartment, was a little girl in deep mourning. All was black about her save the white frills of her drawers, which peeped below her short, black, flounced frock. A thoughtful, gentle child, with a smooth, pale forehead, earnest eyes, and long, dark eyelashes that swept her cheek. It was a gloomy September day, foggy, and threatening rain—a *sad*-looking day ;

and the child's face seemed to have borrowed the aspect of the weather, pervaded, as it was, by a tinge of sadness. That little girl was myself, Anne Hereford.

The train slackened speed, and glided into an important station, larger than any we had passed. It was striking one, and the guard came up to the carriage. "Now, my little lady," said he, "change lines here, and stop for ten minutes."

I liked that guard. He had a kind, hearty face, and he had come up several times to the carriage-door during the journey, asking how I got on. He told me he had a little girl of his own, about as old as I.

"Are you hungry?" he asked, as he lifted me from the carriage.

"Not very, thank you. I have eaten the biscuits."

"Halloa! Stern!" he called out, stopping a man who was hurrying past. "Are you going with the Nettleby train?"

"Yes. What if I am?" was the man's answer. He was rightly named Stern, for he had a stern, sour face.

“See this little girl. She is in the guard’s charge. To be put in the ladies’ carriage, and taken on to Nettleby.”

The man gave a short nod by way of answer, and hurried away. And the guard took me into a large room, where crowds were pressing round a counter. “Here, Miss Williams,” he said, to one of the young women behind it, “give this little lady something to eat and drink, and take care of her till the Nettleby train starts. She’s to have what comes to a shilling.”

“What will you take, my dear?” asked Miss Williams.

The counter was so full of good things that I did not know what, but fixed at length upon a plum-tart. Miss Williams laughed, and said I had better eat some sandwiches first and the tart afterwards.

She was pouring me out a cup of coffee when the guard came up again. “Your baggage is changed, little lady,” said he. “You’ll find it all right at the Nettleby station. Good day.”

“Good-bye, and thank you,” I answered, holding out my hand, that he might shake it. I felt

sorry to part with him—he seemed like a friend. Soon after, the surly guard put in his head and beckoned to me. He marshalled me to a carriage which had a similar board upon it to the other, “For Ladies Only,” and shut me in without a word. Two ladies sat opposite to me. They did not speak either; but they stared a great deal. I thought it must be at the two tarts Miss Williams had given me in a paper bag, and did not like to eat them.

At the next station another lady got in, and she began talking at once.

“Are you travelling all alone, little girl?”

“Yes, ma’am. The guard takes care of me.”

“Have you come far?”

I had come from a remote part of Devonshire, the sea-coast. It seemed a long way to me, and I said so.

“Will you tell me your name? I daresay it is a pretty one.”

“It is Anne Hereford.”

“Devonshire is a very nice part of the country. Have you lived in it all your life?”

“Not quite. I was born in India. Mamma

brought me to England when I was three years old."

"You are in deep mourning. Is it for a near relative?"

I did not answer. I turned to look out at the window until the tears should go away again. I could not bear that strangers should see them. The lady asked again, and presently I turned round.

"For mamma."

She was silent for some time, looking at me.

"Is your papa dead also?"

"He died a long while before mamma did."

"You say you were born in India: perhaps he was an officer?"

"He was Colonel Hereford."

"How many brothers and sisters have you?"

"Not any."

"Where are you going to live?"

"I don't know. I am going now to my Aunt Selina's."

The train approached a station, and the lady got out, or she probably would have asked me a great deal more. At the station following that,

the two silent ladies left, and I was alone again. The first thing I did was to eat my tarts and throw away the paper bag. After that I fell asleep, and remembered no more till the guard's surly voice woke me.

"This is Nettleby, if you are a-going to get out. He said something about some luggage. How much is it?"

"A large box and a small one, and two carpet-bags. 'Miss Hereford, passenger to Nettleby,' is written on them. Can you please to tell me whether it is far to Mr. Edwin Barley's?"

"I don't know any Mr. Edwin Barley. Jem," added he, to one of the porters, "see after her. I'm going to hand out her things."

"Where do you want to go, miss?" the porter asked.

"To Mr. Edwin Barley's. They told me I must get out at the Nettleby station, and ask to be sent on, unless a carriage met me here."

"You must mean Mr. Edwin Barley of Hallam."

"Yes, that's it. Is it far?"

"Well, Hallam's five miles off, and the house

is a mile on this side of it. There's no rail, miss ; you must go by the omnibus."

"But are you sure that Mrs. Edwin Barley has not come to meet me?" I asked, feeling a sort of chill.

Not any one had come, and the porter put me into the omnibus with some more passengers. What a long drive it seemed! And the hedges and trees looked very dreary, for the shades of evening were gathering.

At the foot of a hill the omnibus pulled up, and a man who had sat by the driver came round. "Ain't there somebody inside for Mr. Edwin Barley's?"

"Yes ; I am."

I got out, and the luggage was put upon the ground. "Two shillings, miss," said the man.

"Two shillings !" I repeated, in great alarm.

"Why, did you expect to come for one—and inside too! It's uncommon cheap, is this omnibus."

"Oh, it is not that. But I have not any money."

"Not got any money!"

"They did not give me any. They gave the guard my fare to Nettleby. Mr. Sterling said I should be sure to be met."

The man went up to the driver "I say, Bill, this child says she's got no money."

The driver turned round and looked at me. "We can call to-morrow for it; I daresay it's all right. Do you belong to the Barleys, miss?"

"Mrs. Edwin Barley is my aunt. I am come on a visit to her."

"Oh, it's all right. Get up, Joe."

"But please," said I, stopping the man, in an agony of fear—for I could see no house or sign of one, save a small, round, low building that might contain one room—"which *is* Mr. Edwin Barley's? Am I to stay in the road with the boxes?"

The man laughed, said he had supposed I knew, and began shouting out, "Here, missis!" two or three times. "You see that big green gate, miss?" he added to me. "Well, that leads up to Mr. Barley's, and that's his lodge."

A woman came out of the lodge, in answer to the shouts, and opened the gate. The man ex-

plained, put the trunks inside the gate, and the omnibus drove on.

“ I beg pardon that I can’t go up to the house with you, miss, but it’s not far, and you can’t miss it,” said she. “ I have got my baby sick in its cradle, and dare not leave it alone. You are little Miss Hereford ?”

“ Yes.”

“ It’s odd they never sent to meet you at Nettleby, if they knew you were coming ! But they have visitors at the house, and perhaps young madam forgot it. Straight on, miss, and you’ll soon come to the hall door ; go up the steps, and give a good pull at the bell.”

There was no help for it : I had to go up the gloomy avenue alone. It was a broad gravel drive, wide enough for two carriages to pass each other ; a thick grove of trees on either side. The road wound round, and I had just got in sight of the house when I was startled considerably by what proved to be a man’s head projecting beyond the trees. He appeared to be gazing steadfastly at the house, but turned his face suddenly at my approach. But for that, I might not have

observed him. The face looked dark, ugly, menacing; and I started with a spring to the other side of the way.

I did not speak to him, or he to me, but my heart beat with fear, and I was glad enough to see lights from several of the windows in front of me. I thought it a very large house; I found afterwards that it contained eighteen rooms, and some of them small; but then we had lived in a pretty cottage of six. There was no need to ring. At the open door stood a man and a maid-servant, laughing and talking.

“Who are you?” cried the girl.

“I want Mrs. Edwin Barley.”

“Then I think want must be your master,” she returned. “It is somebody from Hallam, I suppose. Mrs. Edwin Barley cannot possibly see you to-night.”

“You just go away, little girl,” added the footman. “You must come to-morrow morning, if you want anything.”

Their manner was so authoritative that I felt frightened, nearly crying as I stood. What if they should really turn me away!

“Why don’t you go?” asked the girl, sharply.

“I have nowhere to go to. My boxes are down at the gate.”

“Why, who are you?” she inquired, in a quick tone.

“I am Miss Hereford.”

“Heart alive!” she whispered to the man. “I beg your pardon, miss. I’ll call Charlotte Delves.”

“What’s that? Who will you call?” broke from an angry voice at the back of the hall. “Call ‘Charlotte Delves,’ will you? Go in to your work this instant, you insolent girl. Do you hear me, Jemima?”

“I didn’t know you were there, Miss Delves,” was the half-saucy, half-deprecating answer. “The young lady has come—Miss Hereford.”

A tall, slight, good-looking woman of thirty-five or thirty-six came forward. I could not tell whether she was a lady or a smart maid. She wore a small, stylish cap, and a handsome muslin gown with flounces—which were in fashion then. Her eyes were light; long, light curls fell on either side her face, and her address was good.

“How do you do, Miss Hereford?” she said, taking my hand. “Come in, my dear. We did not expect you until next week. Mrs. Barley is in the drawing-room.”

“Mrs. Barley is in her chamber, dressing for dinner,” contended Jemima, from the back of the hall, as if intent on aggravation.

Miss Delves made no reply. She ran upstairs, and opened a door, from whence came a warm glow of fire-light. “Wait there a moment,” she said, looking round at me. “Mrs. Edwin Barley, the child has come.”

“What child?” returned a voice—a young, gay, sweet voice.

“Little Miss Hereford.”

“My goodness! Come to-day! And I with no mourning about me, to speak of. Well, let her come in.”

I knew my Aunt Selina again in a moment. She had stayed with us in Devonshire for three months two years before, when she was nineteen. The same lovely face, with its laughing blue eyes, and its shining golden hair. She wore an embroidered clear-muslin white dress, with low body

and sleeves, and a few black ribbons; jet bracelets, and a long jet chain.

“You darling child! But what made you come in this strange way, without notice?”

“Mr. Sterling said he wrote word to you, Selina, that I should be here on Thursday. You ought to have had the letter yesterday.”

“Well, so he did write; but I thought—how stupid I must have been!” she interrupted, with a sudden laugh. “I declare I took it to mean next Thursday. But you are all the more welcome, dear. You have grown prettier, Anne, with those deep eyes of yours.”

I stood before her very gravely. I had *dreaded* the meeting, believing it would be one of sobs and lamentation for my mother: not taking into account how careless and light-headed Selina was. I had called her “Selina,” since, a little girl of four, I had gone on a visit to Keppe-Carew.

Taking off my bonnet, she kissed me several times, and then held me before her by my hands as she sat on the sofa. Miss Delves went out and closed the door.

“They are not home from shooting yet, Anne, so we can have a little talk to ourselves. When they go to the far covers, there’s no knowing when they’ll be in: two nights ago they kept me waiting dinner until eight o’clock.”

“Who did, Aunt Selina?”

“Mr. Barley, and the rest,” she answered, carelessly. “Anne, how very strange it was that your mamma should have died so quickly at the last! It was only two weeks before her death that she wrote to tell me she was ill.”

“She had been ill longer than that, Aunt Selina——”

“Call me Selina, child.”

“But she did not tell any one until she knew there was danger. She did not tell me.”

“It was a renewal of that old complaint she had in India—that inward complaint.”

I turned my head and my wet eyes from her. “They told me it was her heart, Selina.”

“Yes; in a measure; that had something to do with it. It must have been a sad parting, Anne. Why, child, you are sobbing!”

“Please don’t talk of it!”

“But I must talk of it: I like to have my curiosity gratified,” she said, in her quick way. “Did the doctors say from the first that there was no hope?”

“Mamma knew there was no hope when she wrote to you. She had told me so the day before.”

“I wonder she told you at all.”

“Oh, Selina! that fortnight was too short for the leave-taking; for all she had to say to me. It will be years, perhaps, before we meet again.”

“Meet again! Meet where?”

“In Heaven!”

“You are a strange child!” exclaimed Selina, looking at me very steadfastly. “Ursula has infected you, I see, with her serious notions. I used to tell her there was time enough for it years hence.”

“And mamma used to tell you that perhaps, if you put off and put off, the years hence might never come for you, Selina.”

“What! you remember that, do you?” she said, with a smile. “Yes, she used to lecture

me ; she was fifteen years older than I, and assumed the right to do so."

"Mamma never *lectured* ; what she said was always kind and gentle," was my sobbing answer.

"Yes, yes. You think me insensible now, Anne ; but my grief is over—that is, the violence of the grief. When the letter came to say Ursula was dead, I cried the whole day, never ceasing."

"Mamma had a warning of her death," I continued ; for it was one of the things she had charged me to tell to her sister Selina.

"Had a what, child ?"

"A warning. The night before she was taken ill—I mean dangerously ill—she dreamt she saw papa in a most beautiful place, all light and flowers ; no place on earth could ever have been so beautiful except the Garden of Eden. He beckoned her to come to him, and pointed to a vacant place by his side, saying, 'It is ready for you now, Ursula.' Mamma awoke then, and the words were sounding in her ears ; she could have felt sure that they were positively spoken."

“And you can tell me this with a grave face, calling it a warning!” exclaimed Selina.

“Mamma charged me to tell it you. She related the dream to us the next morning——”

“*Us!* Whom do you mean, child?”

“Me and our old maid Betty. She was my nurse, you know. Mamma said what a pleasant dream it was, that she was sorry to awake from it; but after she grew ill, she said she knew it was sent as a warning.”

Selina laughed. “You have lived boxed up with that stupid old Betty and your mamma, child, until you are like a grave little woman. Ursula was always superstitious. You will say you believe in ghosts next.”

“No, I do not believe in ghosts. I do in warnings. Mamma said that never a Keppe-Carew died yet without being warned of it: though few of them had noticed it at the time.”

“There, that will do, Anne. I am a Carew, and I don’t want to be frightened into watching for a ‘warning.’ You are a Carew also, by the mother’s side. Do you know, my poor child, that you are not left well off?”

“Yes ; mamma has told me all. I don’t mind.”

“Don’t mind !” echoed Selina, with another light laugh. “That’s because you don’t understand, Anne. What little your mamma had left has been sunk in an annuity for your education—eighty or a hundred pounds a year, until you are eighteen. There’s something more, I believe, for clothes and incidental expenses.”

“I said I did not mind, Selina, because I am not afraid of getting my own living. Mamma said that a young lady, well-educated and of good birth, can always command a desirable position as governess. She told me not to fear, for God would take care of me.”

“Some money might be desirable for all that,” returned my aunt, in a tone that sounded full of irreverence to my unaccustomed ears. “The maddest step Colonel Hereford ever took was that of selling out. He thought to better himself, and he spent and lost the money, leaving your mamma with very little when he died.”

“I don’t think mamma cared much for money, Selina.”

"I don't think she did, or she would not have taken matters so quietly. Do you remember, Anne, how she used to go on at me when I said I should marry Edwin Barley?"

"Yes; mamma said how very wrong it would be of you to marry for money."

"Quite true. She used to put her hands to her ears when I said I hated him. Now, what are those earnest eyes of yours searching me for?"

"Do you hate him, Selina?"

"I am not dying of love for him, you strange child."

"One day a poor boy had a monkey before the window, and you said Mr. Edwin Barley was as ugly as that. Is he ugly?"

Selina burst into a peal of ringing laughter. "Oh, he is very handsome, Anne; as handsome as the day: when you see him you shall tell me if you don't think so. I——. What is the matter? What are you looking at?"

As I stood before my aunt, the door behind her seemed to be pushed gently open. I had thought some one was coming in; and said so.

“The fire-light must have deceived you, Anne. That door is kept bolted; it leads to a passage communicating with my bedroom, but we do not use it.”

“I am certain that I saw it open,” was my answer; and an unpleasant, fanciful thought came over me that it might be the man I saw in the avenue. “It is shut now; it shut again when I spoke.”

She rose, walked to the door, and tried to open it, but it was fast.

“You see, Anne. Don’t you get fanciful, my dear; that is what your mamma was:” but I shook my head in answer.

“Selina, did not Mr. Edwin Barley want me to go to Mrs. Hemson’s instead of coming here?”

“Who told you that?”

“I heard Mr. Sterling talking of it with mamma.”

“Mr. Edwin Barley did, little woman. Did you hear why he wished it?”

“No.”

“You should have heard that, it was so flatter-

ing to me. He thought I was too giddy to take charge of a young lady."

"Did he?"

"But Ursula would not accept the objection. It could not matter for a few weeks, she wrote to Mr. Edwin Barley, whether I were giddy or serious, and she could not think of consigning you, even temporarily, to Mrs. Hemson. Ah! my cousin Frances Carew and I took exactly opposite courses, Anne: I married for money, she for love. She met an attractive stranger at a watering-place, and married him."

"And it was not right?"

"It was all wrong. He was a tradesman. A good-looking, educated man; I grant that; but a tradesman. Never was such a thing heard of, as for a Carew to stoop to that. You see, Anne, she had learnt to like him before she knew anything of his position, or who he was. He was a visitor at the place, just as she was. Of course she ought to have given him up. Not she; she gave herself and her money to him, and a very pretty little fortune she had."

"Did she marry in disobedience?"

“That cannot be charged upon her, for she was alone in the world, and her own mistress. But a Carew of Keppe-Carew ought to have known better.”

“She was not of Keppe-Carew, Selina.”

“She was. Don’t you know that, Anne? Her father was Carew of Keppe-Carew; and when he died without a son, his brother, your mamma’s father and mine, succeeded to Keppe-Carew. He died in his turn, leaving no son, and Keppe-Carew and its broad lands went to a distant man, the male heir. We three Carews have all married badly, in one way or another.”

Mrs. Edwin Barley was speaking dreamily then, as if forgetting anybody heard her.

“She, Frances, married Hemson the tradesman, throwing a barrier between herself and her family; Ursula married Colonel Hereford, to wear out a few of her best years in India, and then to die in poverty, and leave an unprovided-for child; and I have married him, Edwin Barley. Which is the worst, I wonder?”

I thought over what she said in my busy brain. Few children had so active a one.

"Selina, you say you married Mr. Edwin Barley because he is rich."

"Well."

"Why did you, when you were rich yourself?"

"*I* rich? You will count riches differently when you are older. Why, Anne, do you know what my fortune was? Four thousand pounds. Ursula had the same, and she and Colonel Hereford spent it. That put a notion in my father's head, and he tied mine up tight enough, securing it to my absolute use until I die."

"Will it be Mr. Barley's when you die, Selina?"

"Were I to die before next Monday, it would be yours, pussy, for it is so settled. After that, if I die without a will, it would go to Mr. Edwin Barley; but I shall be of age next Monday, and then can make one. I think it must be my first care—a will;" she laughed. "So munificent a sum to dispose of! Shall I leave it to you?"

The room-door was pushed open, and some one entered. A shortish man, of nearly forty years, in a velvet shooting-coat and gaiters, and with a dark face: the same dark face that

looked out from the trees in the avenue. I shrank round Selina with a sudden fear. Not that the features were particularly ill-favoured in themselves, but so dark and stern. And the remembrance of the fright was on me still.

“Where are you coming to, child?” she said.
“This is Mr. Edwin Barley.”

CHAPTER II.

IN THE WOOD.

THAT Mr. Edwin Barley! My imagination had been setting the face down for a robber's at least; and the thought flashed over me—How could Selina have married him? Another thought came with it—Had he been the intruder at the door?

“Who is that, Selina?” he asked, in a very strong, determined voice, but not an unpleasing one.

“Anne Hereford. Fancy my making so stupid a mistake as to conclude it was next Thursday the lawyer meant. And she has had to find her way from Nettleby in the best way she could.”

He looked at me with his black eyes, the blackest eyes I had ever seen. Either they wore a warning expression, or I fancied so, and I took

it to mean I was not to say I saw him watching the house from the avenue. No fear, after that, that I should speak of it.

“Did you walk from Nettleby, little one?”

“No, sir. I came in the omnibus to the gate.”

“She has been asking me if you were very handsome; and I told her to wait and see,” observed Selina with a laugh, and somehow it grated on my ears. He made no reply in words, but his brow contracted a little. I noticed one thing—that he had very pretty teeth, white and even.

“How is it you are home before the others?” she resumed. “And where are they lingering? Charlotte Delves says the dinner is spoiling.”

“They cannot be far behind,” was Mr. Edwin Barley’s answer. “I’ll go and dress.”

As he went out of the room we heard sounds of voices and laughter. Selina opened the window, and I stood by her. The night had grown clearer, the moon was bright. Three gentlemen, dressed something like Mr. Edwin

Barley, were approaching the house with game, guns, and dogs.

“Can you see them by this light, Anne?”

“I can see that two are young, and one looks old. He has gray hair.”

“Not very old, not more than fifty—but he is so stout. It is the parson, Mr. Martin.”

“Do parsons go out shooting, Selina?”

“Only when they can get the chance,” she laughed. “That young one is Philip King, a ward of Mr. Edwin Barley’s. He and I are not friends at all, and I do what I can to vex him. He is terribly ill-tempered.”

“Is he!”

“He fell in love with me at Easter, the silly boy! Fancy that! One can’t think it was in earnest, you know, but it really seemed like it. I asked him if he would like his ears boxed, and Mr. Edwin Barley gave us both a sharp talking-to, saying we ought to be sent to school again.”

“Both! But if it was not your fault?”

“Mr. Edwin Barley said it was my fault,” she returned, with a laugh. “Perhaps it was. He has not, as I believe, loved Philip King since.”

“Who is the other one with them, Selina?” I asked, as the gentlemen below disappeared.

“The other is George Heneage—a great friend of mine. Hush! he is coming up.”

George Heneage entered. A young man, tall, slender, active; with a pale, pleasant face, and dark wavy hair. He had a merry smile, and I thought I had never seen any one so nice-looking. Mrs. Edwin Barley moved to the fire, and he took her hand in greeting.

“Well! And how have you been all day? Dull?”

It was the pleasantest voice! Quite a contrast after that of Mr. Edwin Barley.

“Much any of you care whether I am dull or gay,” she returned in answer, half laughing, half pouting. “The partridges get all your time, just now. I might be dead and buried before any of you came home to see after me.”

“We must shoot, you know, Selina. One of us, at any rate, came home a couple of hours ago—Barley.”

“Not to me. He has but just come in. You must be mistaken.”

“Look here. I was away for a short while from the party, seeing after the horse I lamed the other day, and when I got back, Barley had vanished: they thought he had gone to look after me. Perhaps he had in one sense, the great simpleton—Hallo! who’s that?” He broke off, seeing me for the first time, as I stood partly within the shade of the window-curtain.

“It is little Anne Hereford. She has come a week before I expected her. Anne, come forward, and let Mr. Heneage make love to you. It is a pastime he favours.”

He lifted me up by the waist, looked at me, and put me down again.

“A pretty little face to make love to. How old are you?”

“Eleven, sir.”

“Eleven!” he echoed, in surprise. “I should have taken you for nine at the very most. Eleven!”

“And eleventeen in sober sense,” interposed Selina, in her lightest and most careless manner. “I suppose children are so who never live with brothers and sisters. You should hear her talk,

George ! I tell her, her mamma and nurse have made an old woman of her."

"Dare I venture to your presence in this trim, Mrs. Edwin Barley?"

The speaker was the Rev. Mr. Martin, who came slowly in, pointing to his attire.

"It is Barley's fault, and you must blame him, not me," he continued. "Barley invited me to say grace at your table to-day, and then disappeared, keeping us waiting for him until now, and giving me no time to go home and make myself presentable."

"Never mind, Mr. Martin, there are worse misfortunes at sea," she said, in that charmingly attractive manner that she could sometimes use. "I have sat down with gentlemen in shooting-coats before to-day, and enjoyed my dinner none the worse for it. Is that you, Miss Delves?"

Footsteps were passing the open door, and Miss Delves came in.

"Did you speak, Mrs. Edwin Barley?"

"Yes. Take this child, please: she must have some tea. Anne, dear, ask for anything to

eat that you best fancy. You shall come up again after dinner."

We went to a small parlour on the ground floor—Miss Delves said it was her own sitting-room—and she rang the bell. The maid who had been gossiping at the front door came in to answer it.

"Are you at tea still, Jemima?"

"Yes, Miss Delves."

"I thought so. There's no regularity unless I'm about everywhere myself. Bring in a cup for Miss Hereford, and some bread and butter."

They both left the room. I supposed that Miss Delves was going to dine presently, for a cloth was spread over one end of the table, with a knife and silver forks, the cruet-stand and salt-cellar, glasses, and a decanter of wine. Presently Jemima came back with a small tray, that had my tea upon it. She seemed a free-and-easy sort of girl, sat down in a chair, and began chattering. Another servant came in with a small jar of preserves. They called her Sarah.

"Miss Delves has sent some jam for the young

lady, if she'd like it. Or will she take a slice of cold meat first, she says?"

"I'll have the jam, please."

"That's right, miss," laughed Jemima.
"Sweets is good."

"Arn't you coming to your tea, Jemima? There'll be a fuss if she comes in and finds you have not begun it."

"Bother the tea! We are not obliged to swallow it down just at the minute she pleases," was the answer of Jemima.

"I say," exclaimed the other, suddenly, "what do you think I saw? Young King——"

Jemima gave a warning shake of the head, and pointed to me. The conversation was dropped to a whisper, in which I once caught the words, "that handsome George Heneage." Presently steps were heard approaching, and the two maids disturbed themselves. Sarah caught up the plate of bread and butter, and stood as if she were handing it to me, and Jemima stirred the fire vigorously. It had been warm in the day, but the bit of lighted fire in the grate looked pleasant in the autumn evening. The footsteps passed on.

“How stupid you are, Sarah! startling one for nothing!” exclaimed Jemima.

“I thought it was Charlotte Delves. It sounded just like her foot.”

“She’s in the kitchen, and won’t come out of it till the dinner’s gone in. She’s in one of her tempers to-day.”

“Is Charlotte Delves the mistress?” I could not help asking.

Both the maids burst out laughing. “She would like to be, miss; and she is, too, in many things,” answered Jemima. “When young madam came home first——”

“Hush, Jemima! she may go and repeat it again.”

Jemima looked at me. “No: she does not look like it. You won’t go and repeat in the drawing-room the nonsense we foolish servants talk, will you, Miss Hereford?”

“Of course I will not. Mamma taught me never to carry tales; she said it made mischief.”

“And so it does, miss,” cried Jemima. “Your mamma was a nice lady, I’m sure! Was she not Mrs. Edwin Barley’s sister?”

Before I had time to answer, Charlotte Delves came in. We had not heard her, and I thought she must have crept up on tiptoe. Sarah made her escape. Jemima took up the jam-pot.

"What are you waiting for?" she demanded, with asperity.

"I came in to see if the young lady wanted anything, ma'am."

"When Miss Hereford wants anything, she will ring."

Jemima retired. I went on with my tea, and Miss Delves began asking me questions about home and mamma. We were interrupted by a footman. He was bringing the fish out of the dining-room, and he laid the dish down on the table. Miss Delves turned her chair towards it, and began her dinner. I found that this was her usual manner of dining, but I thought it a curious one. The dishes, as they came out of the dining-room, were placed before her, and she helped herself. Her other meals she took when she pleased, Jemima generally waiting upon her. I did wonder who she could be.

It seemed that I had to sit there a long while. I was then taken upstairs by Jemima, and my hair brushed. It hung down in curls all round, and Jemima pleased me by saying it was the loveliest brown hair she ever saw. Then I was marshalled to the drawing-room. Jemima opened the door quietly, and I went in, seen, I believe, by nobody. It was a large room, of a three-cornered shape, quite full of bright furniture. Selina's grand piano was in the angle.

Standing before the fire, talking, were the clergyman and Mr. Edwin Barley. A stranger might have taken the one for the other, for the clergyman was in his sporting clothes, and Mr. Barley was all in black, with a white neckcloth. On a distant sofa, apparently reading a newspaper, sat Philip King; his features were handsome, but they had a very cross, disagreeable expression. He held the newspaper nearly level with his face, and I saw that his eyes, instead of being on it, were watching the movements of Mrs. Edwin Barley. She was at the piano, not so much singing or playing, as trying scraps of songs and pieces; Mr. Heneage standing by and

talking to her. I went quietly round by the chairs at the back, and sat down on the low footstool at the corner of the hearth. The clergyman saw me and smiled. Mr. Barley did not; he stood with his back to me. He also seemed to be watching the piano, or those at it, while he spoke in a low, confidential tone with the clergyman.

“I disagree with you entirely, Barley,” Mr. Martin was saying. “Rely upon it, he will be all the better and happier for following a profession. Why! at Easter he made up his mind to read for the Bar!”

“Young men are changeable as the wind, especially those whom fortune has placed at ease in the world,” replied Mr. Barley. “Philip was red-hot for the Bar at Easter, as you observe; but something appears to have set him against it now.”

“You, as his guardian and trustee, should urge him to take it up; or, if not that, something else. A life of idleness plays the very ruin with some natures; and it strikes me that Philip King has no great resources within him

to counteract the mischief of non-occupation. What is the amount of his property?" resumed Mr. Martin, after a pause.

"About eighteen hundred pounds a year the estate brings in."

"Nonsense! I thought it was only ten or twelve."

"Eighteen, full. Reginald's was a long minority, you know."

"Well, if it brought in eight-and-twenty, I should still say give him a profession. Let him have some legitimate work; occupy his hands and his head, and they won't get into mischief. That's sound advice, mind, Barley."

"Quite sound," rejoined Mr. Barley; but there was a tone in his voice throughout, that to me seemed to tell either of want of sincerity or else of a knowledge that to urge a profession on Philip King would be wrong and useless. At this period of my life people used to reproach me with taking up prejudices, likes, and dislikes; as I grew older, I knew that God had gifted me in an eminent degree with the faculty of reading human countenances and human tones.

"I have no power to force a profession upon him," resumed Mr. Edwin Barley; "and I should not exercise it if I had. Shall I tell you why?"

"Well."

"I don't think his lungs are sound. In my opinion, he is likely to go off as his brother did."

"Of consumption!" hastily muttered the clergyman: and Mr. Edwin Barley nodded.

"Therefore, why urge him to fag at acquiring a profession that he may not live to exercise?" continued Mr. Barley. "He looks anything but well; he is nothing like as robust as he was at Easter."

Mr. Martin turned his head and attentively scanned the face of Philip King. "I don't see anything the matter with him, Barley, except that he looks uncommonly cross. I hope you are mistaken."

"I hope I am. I saw a whole row of medicine phials in his room yesterday: when I inquired what they did there, he told me they contained steel medicine—tonics—the physician at

Oxford had ordered them. Did you ever notice him at dinner—what he eats ?”

“Not particularly.”

“Do so, then, on the next opportunity. He takes scarcely anything. The commencement of Reginald’s malady was loss of appetite: the doctors prescribed tonics for him. But they did not succeed in saving him.”

Once more Mr. Martin turned his eyes on Philip King. “How old was Reginald King when he died ?”

“Twenty-three. Three years older than Philip is now.”

“Well, poor fellow, I hope he will outlive his weakness, whatever may cause it, and get strong again. That money of his would be a nice windfall for somebody to drop into,” added the clergyman, after a pause. “Who is heir-at-law ?”

“I am.”

“You !”

“Of course I am,” was the quiet reply of Mr. Edwin Barley.

“Nurse him up, nurse him up, then,” said

the clergyman, jokingly. "Lest, if anything did happen, the world should say you had not done your best to prevent it; for you know you are a dear lover of money, Barley."

There may have been a great deal more said, but I did not hear. My head had sought the wall for its resting-place, and sleep stole over me.

What I felt most glad of, the next morning, was to get my purse. There were twenty-seven shillings in it; and old Betty had caused it to be put in one of the boxes, vexing me. "People in the train might rob me of it," she said.

Jemima waited on me at dressing, and I had breakfast in Miss Delves's parlour. Afterwards I went up to Mrs. Edwin Barley in the drawing-room. She was in mourning, deep as mine.

"I had been tempted to put it off for a cool dress yesterday evening," she said to me. "What with the dinner, and the fire they *will* have, though I am sure it is not weather for it, I feel melted in black. The fire is kept large to please Philip King. So Miss Delves informed me when I remonstrated against it the other day. He must be of a chilly nature."

Remembering what I had heard said the previous night, I thought he might be. But the words had afforded the opportunity for a question that I was longing, in my curiosity, to put.

“Selina, who is Miss Delves? Is she a lady or a servant?”

“You had better not call her a servant, Anne; she would never forgive it,” answered Selina, with a laugh. “She is a relative of Mr. Edwin Barley’s.”

“Then, why does she not sit with you, and dine at table?”

“Because I do not choose that she shall sit with me, and dine at table,” was the resentful, haughty retort; and I could see that there had been some past unpleasantness in regard to Miss Delves. “When Mr. Edwin Barley’s mother died, who used to live with him, Charlotte Delves came here as mistress of the house. That was all very well so long as there was no legitimate mistress, but ages went on, and I came to it. She assumed a great deal; I found she was planted down at table with us, and made herself my companion in the drawing-room at will. I

did not like it ; and one day I told my husband so in her presence. I said that I must be the sole mistress in my own house, and quitted the room, leaving them to settle it. Since then she has taken the parlour for her sitting-room, and looks to the household, as she did before. In short, Miss Delves is housekeeper. I have no objection to that ; it saves me trouble, and I know nothing of domestic management. Now and then I invite her to take tea with us, or to a drive with me in the pony carriage, and we are vastly polite to each other always.”

“But if you do not like her——”

“Like her !” interrupted Selina. “My dear child, we hate each other like poison. It was not in human nature, you know, for her not to feel my entrance to the house as a *wrong*, displacing her from her high post, and from the influence she had contrived to acquire over Mr. Edwin Barley. They were as intimate as brother and sister ; and I believe he is the only living being she cares for in the whole world. When I took a high tone with her, it exasperated her all the more against me, there’s no doubt of it ; and

she repays it by carrying petty tales of me to Mr. Edwin Barley."

"And whose part did he take, Selina?"

"MINE, of course—always?" she returned, with a forcible emphasis on the first word. "But it has never been open warfare between me and Miss Delves, Anne; you must understand that. Should anything of the sort supervene, she would have to quit the house. A bitter pill that would be, for she has no money, and would have to go out as housekeeper in reality, or something of the kind. My occupation would be gone then."

"What occupation?"

"The saying and doing all sorts of wild things to make her think ill of me. She goes and whispers them to Mr. Edwin Barley. He listens to her—I know he does, and that provokes me. Well, little pet, what are those honest brown eyes of yours longing to say?"

"Why did you marry him, Selina?"

"People say for money, Anne. I say it was fate."

"He persuaded you, perhaps?"

"He did. Persuaded, pressed, worried me. He was two years talking me into it. Better, perhaps, that he had given his great love elsewhere? Better for him, possibly, that he had married Charlotte Delves!"

"But did he want to marry Charlotte Delves?"

"Never. I don't believe that even the thought ever entered his head. The servants say she used to hope it; but they rattle nonsense at random. Edwin Barley never cared but for two things in the world: myself and money."

"Money?"

"Money, Anne. Pretty little pieces of gold and silver; new, crisp bank-notes; yellow old deeds of parchment, representing houses and lands. He cares for money almost as much as for me; and he'll care for it more than for me in time. Who's this?"

It was Philip King. He came in, looking more cross, if possible, than he did the previous night. His face shone out sickly, too, in the bright morning sun. Selina spoke, but did not offer her hand.

"Good morning, Mr. King; I hope you feel

better to-day. You did not get down to breakfast, I understand. Neither did I."

"I did get down to breakfast," he answered, speaking as if something had very much put him out. "I took it with Mr. Edwin Barley in his study."

"Leaving George Heneage to breakfast alone. You two polite men! Had I known that, I would have come down and breakfasted with him."

That she said this in a spirit of mischief, in a manner most especially calculated to provoke him, I saw by the saucy look that shot from her bright blue eyes.

"I think you and Heneage breakfast together quite often enough as it is, Mrs. Edwin Barley."

"You do? Then, if I were you, sir, I would have the good manners to keep such thoughts to myself: or tell them to Mr. Edwin Barley, if you like. He might offer you a premium for them—who knows?"

Philip King was getting into an angry heat.

"I hope you have tolerably strong shoulders,"

she resumed, as if struck with some sudden thought.

“Why so?”

“George Heneage intends to try his cane upon them on the next convenient day.”

His lips turned white.

“Mrs. Barley, what do you mean?”

“Just what I say. You have taken to peep and pry after me—whether set on by any one, or from some worthy motive of your own, you best know. It will not serve you, Philip King. If there be one thing more detestable than another, it is that of spying. I happened to mention this new pastime of yours before Mr. Heneage, and he observed that he had a cane somewhere. That’s all.”

The intense aggravation with which she said it was enough to rouse the ire of one less excitable than Philip King. He was breaking out in abuse of Mr. Heneage, when the latter happened to come in. A few menacing words, a dark look or two from either side, and then came the quarrel.

A quarrel that terrified me. I ran out of the

room ; I ran back again ; I don't know what I did. Mrs. Edwin Barley seemed nearly as excited as they were : it was not the first time I had seen her in a passion. She called out (taking the words from the old ballad, "Lord Thomas,") that she cared more for the little finger of George Heneage than for the whole body of ill-conditioned Philip King. I knew it was only one of her wild sayings : when in a passion she did not mind what she said, or whom she offended. I knew that this present quarrel was altogether Selina's fault—that her love of provocation had brought it on. Mr. Edwin Barley had gone over to his brother's ; and it was well, perhaps, that it was so.

Jemima appeared on the stairs, carrying up a pail—there was no back staircase to the house. "What is the matter, Miss Hereford?" she asked. "Goodness me ! how you are trembling !"

"They are quarrelling in there — Mr. Heneage and Mr. King. I am afraid they will fight."

"Oh, it has come to that, has it?" said Jemima, carelessly. "I thought it would.

Never mind them, Miss Hereford; they'll not hurt you."

She tripped upstairs with the pail, as if a quarrel were the most natural event in the world, and I looked into the room again. Mr. Heneage held Philip King by the collar of the coat.

"Mark me!" he was saying; "if I catch you dodging my movements again, if I hear of your being insolent to this lady, I'll shoot you with as little compunction as I would a partridge. There!"

"What is Mrs. Edwin Barley to you, that you should interfere?" retorted Philip King, his voice raised to a shriek. "And she! Why does she set herself to provoke me every hour of my life?"

"I interfere of right: by my long friendship with her, and by the respect I bear for her mother's memory. Now you know."

Mr. Heneage gave a shake to the collar as he spoke, and I ran up to my room, there to sob out my fit of terror. My heart was beating, my breath catching itself in gasps. In my own peaceful home I had never seen or heard the faintest shadow of a quarrel.

By-and-by Jemima came in search of me. Mrs. Edwin Barley was waiting for me to go out in the pony carriage. I washed my face and my red eyes, was dressed, and went down. At the door stood a low open basket-chaise, large and wide, drawn by a pony. Mrs. Edwin Barley was already in it, and Mr. Heneage stood waiting for me. He drove, and I sat on a stool at their feet. We went through green lanes, and over a pleasant common. Not a word was said about the recent quarrel; but part of the time they spoke together in an under-tone, and I did not try to hear. We were away about two hours.

“You can run about the grounds until your dinner’s ready, if you like, Anne,” Mrs. Barley said to me when we alighted. “I daresay you feel cramped, sitting so long on that low seat.”

She went in with Mr. Heneage, the footman saying that some ladies were waiting. I ran away amidst the trees, and presently lost myself. As I stood, wondering which way to take, Mr. Edwin Barley and Philip King came through, arm-in-arm, on their way home, talking together eagerly.

I thought Philip King was telling about the quarrel.

It was no doubt unfortunate that my acquaintance with Mr. Edwin Barley should have begun with a fright. I was a most impressionable child, and *could not* get over that first fear. Every time I met him, my heart, as the saying runs, leaped into my mouth. He saw me and spoke.

“So you have got back, Anne Hereford!”

“Yes, sir,” I answered, my lips feeling as if they were glued together.

“Where’s Mrs. Barley?”

“She is gone indoors, sir.”

“And George Heneage. Where’s he?”

“He went in also, sir. John said some visitors were waiting to see Mrs. Barley.”

And to that he made no rejoinder, but went on with Philip King.

Nothing more occurred that day to disturb the peace of the house. A gentleman, who called in the afternoon, was invited to dine, and stayed. Mrs. Edwin Barley rang for me as soon as she went up to the drawing-room. I thought how lovely she looked in her black net dress, and

with the silver ornaments on her neck and arms.

“What did you think of Mr. Philip King’s temper this morning, Anne?” she asked, as she stood near the fire and sipped the cup of coffee that John had brought in.

“Oh, Selina! I never was so alarmed before.”

“You little goose! But it was a specimen, was it not, of gentlemanly bearing?”

“I think—I mean I thought—that it was not Mr. King who was in fault,” I said; not, however, liking to say it.

“You thought it was George Heneage, I suppose. Ah! but you don’t know all, Anne; the scenes behind the curtain are hidden to you. Philip King has wanted a chastisement this fortnight past; and he got it. Unless he alters his policy, he will get one of a different nature. Mr. Heneage will as surely cane him as that I stand here.”

“Why do you like Mr. Heneage so much, Selina?”

“I like him better than anybody I know, Anne. Not with the sort of liking, however,

that Mr. Philip King would insinuate, the worthy youth ! Though it is great fun," she added, with a merry laugh, " to let the young gentleman think I do. I have known George Heneage a long while : he used to visit at Keppe-Carew, and be as one of ourselves. I could not like a brother, if I had one, more than I do George Heneage. And Mr. Philip King, and his ally, Charlotte Delves, tell tales of me to my husband ! It is as good as a comedy."

A comedy ! If she could but have foreseen the comedy's ending !

On the following morning, Saturday, they all went out shooting again. Mrs. Edwin Barley had visitors in the forenoon, and afterwards she drove over to Hallam in the pony carriage, with the little boy-groom Tom, not taking me. I was anywhere—with Charlotte Delves ; with Jemima ; reading a fairy-tale I found ; playing " Poor Mary Anne" on the piano. As it grew towards dusk, and nobody came home, I went strolling down the avenue, and met the pony carriage. Only Tom was in it.

" Where is Mrs. Edwin Barley ?"

“She is coming on, miss, with Mr. Heneage. He came up to the lodge-gate just as we got back.”

I went to the end of the avenue, but did not see her. The woman at the lodge said they had taken the path on the left, which would equally bring them to the house, though by a greater round. I ran along it, and came to the pretty summer-house that stood where the ornamental grounds were railed off from the pasture at the back and the wood beyond. At the foot of the summer-house steps my aunt stood, straining her eyes on a letter, in the fading light; George Heneage was looking over her shoulder, a gun in his hand.

“You see what they say,” he observed. “Rather peremptory, is it not?”

“George, you must go by the first train that starts from Nettleby,” she returned. “You should not lose a minute; the pony carriage will take you. Is that you, Anne?”

“I would give something to know what’s up, and why I am called for in this fashion,” was his rejoinder, spoken angrily. “They might let me

alone until the term I was invited for here is at an end."

Mrs. Edwin Barley laughed. "Perhaps our friend, Philip King, has favoured Heneage Grange with a communication, telling of your fancied misdoings."

No doubt she spoke it lightly, neither believing her own words nor heeding the fashion of them. But George Heneage took them seriously ; and it unfortunately happened that she ran up the steps at the same moment. A stir was heard in the summer-house. Mr. Heneage dashed in in time to see Philip King escaping by the opposite door.

The notion that he had been "spying" was, of course, taken up by Mr. Heneage. With a passionate word, he was speeding after him ; but Mrs. Edwin Barley caught his arm.

"George, you shall not go. There might be murder done between you."

"I'll pay him off ; I'll make him remember it ! Pray release me. I beg your pardon, Selina."

For he had flung her hand away with rather

too much force, in his storm of passion ; and was crashing through the opposite door, and down the steps, in pursuit of Philip King. Both of them made straight for the wood ; but Philip King had a good start, and nothing in his hand ; George Heneage had his gun. Selina alluded to it.

“ I hope it is not loaded ! Flying along with that speed, he might strike it against a tree, and be shot before he knows it. Anne, look here ! You are fleetier than I. Run you crossways over that side grass to the corner entrance ; it will take you to a path in the wood where you will just meet them. Tell Mr. Heneage, from me, that I *command* him to come back, and to let Philip King alone. I command it, in his mother’s name.”

I did not dare to refuse, and yet scarcely dared to go. I ran along, my heart beating. Arrived at the entrance indicated I plunged in, and went on down many turns and windings amidst the trees. They were not very thick, and were intersected by narrow paths. But no one could I see.

And now arrived a small calamity. I had lost my way. How to trace an exit from the wood I knew not, and felt really frightened. Down I sat on an old stump, and cried. What if I should have to stay there until morning!

Not so. A slight noise made me look up. Who should be standing near, his back against a tree, smoking a cigar and smiling at me, but Philip King.

“What is the grief, Miss Anne? Have you met a wolf?”

“I can’t find my way out, sir.”

“Oh, I’ll soon show you that. We are almost close to the south border. You——”

He stopped suddenly, turned his head, and looked attentively in a direction to the left. At that moment there came a report, something seemed to whizz through the air, and strike Philip King. He leaped up, and then fell to the ground with a scream. This was followed, so instantly that it seemed to be part and parcel of the scream, by a distant exclamation of dismay or of warning. From whom did it come?

Though not perfectly understanding what had

occurred, or that Philip King had received a fatal shot, I screamed also, and fell on my knees ; not fainting, but with a sick, horrible sensation of fear, such as perhaps no child ever before experienced. And the next thing I saw was Mr. Edwin Barley, coming towards us with his gun, not quite from the same direction as the shot, but very near it. I had been thinking that George Heneage must have done it, but another question arose now to my terrified heart : Could it have been Mr. Edwin Barley ?

“ Philip, what is it ? ” he asked, as he came up. “ Has any one fired at you ? ”

“ George Heneage,” was the faint rejoinder. “ I saw him. He stood there. ”

With a motion of the eyes, rather than with aught else, poor Philip King pointed to the left, and Mr. Edwin Barley turned and looked, laying his gun against a tree. Nothing was to be seen.

“ Are you sure, Philip ? ”

“ I tell it you with my dying lips. I saw him. ”

Not another word. Mr. Edwin Barley raised his head, but the face had grown still, and had

an awful shade upon it—the same shade that mamma's first wore after she was dead. Mr. Barley put the head gently down, and stood looking at him. All in a moment he caught sight of me, and I think it startled him.

“Are *you* there, you little imp?”

But the word, ugly though it sounds, was spoken in rough surprise, not in unkindness. I cried and shook, too terrified to give any answer. Mr. Barley stood up before Philip King, so that I no longer saw him.

“What were you doing in the wood?”

“I lost my way, and could not get out, sir,” I sobbed, trembling lest he should press for further details. “That gentleman saw me, and was saying he would show me the way out, when he fell.”

“Had he been here long?”

“I don't know. I was crying a good while, and not looking up. It was only a minute ago that I saw him standing there.”

“Did you see Mr. Heneage fire?”

“Oh no, sir. I did not see Mr. Heneage at all.”

He took my hand, walked with me a few steps, and showed me a path that was rather wider than the others.

“Go straight down here until you come to a cross-path, running right and left : it is not far. Take the one to the right, and it will bring you out in front of the house. Do you understand, little one ?”

“Yes, sir,” I answered, though, in truth, too agitated to understand distinctly, and only anxious to get away from him. Suppose he should shoot me ! was running through my foolish thoughts.

“Make speed to the house, then,” he resumed, “and see Charlotte Delves. Tell her what has occurred : that Philip King has been shot, and that she must send help to convey him home. She must also send at once for the doctor, and for the police. Can you remember all that ?”

“Oh yes, sir. Is he much hurt ?”

“He is dead, child. Now be as quick as you can. Do not tell your aunt what has happened : it would alarm her.”

I sped along quicker than any child ever sped before, and soon came to the crosspath. But there I made a mistake: I went blindly on to the left, instead of to the right, and I came suddenly upon Mr. Heneage. He was standing quite still, leaning on his gun, his finger on his lip to impose silence and caution on me, and his face looked as I had never seen it look before, white as death.

"Whose voice was that I heard talking to you?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Mr. Edwin Barley's. Oh, sir, don't stop me; Mr. King is dead!"

"Dead! Mr. King dead?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Edwin Barley says so, and I am on my way to the house to tell Miss Delves to send for the police. Mr. Heneage, did you do it?"

"I! You silly child!" he returned, in an accent of rebuke. "What in the world put that in your head? I have been looking for Philip King—waiting here in the hope that he might pass. There, go along, child, and don't tremble so. That way: you are coming from the house, this."

Back I went, my fears increasing. To an imaginative, excitable, and timid nature, such as mine, all this was simply terrible. I did gain the house, but only to rush into the arms of Jemima, who happened to be in the hall, and fall into a fit of hysterical, nervous, sobbing cries, clinging to her tightly, as if I could never let her go again.

A pretty messenger, truly, in time of need !

CHAPTER III.

GOING OUT IN THE FOG.

HELP had arrived from another quarter. A knot of labourers on the estate, going home from work, happened to choose the road through the wood, and Mr. Edwin Barley heard them.

One of them, a young man they called Duff, was at the house almost as soon as I. He came into the hall, and saw me clinging to Jemima. Nothing could have stopped my threatened fit of hysterics so effectually as an interruption. Duff told his tale. The young heir had been shot in the wood, he said. "Shot dead!"

"The young heir!" cried Jemima, with a cry. She was at no loss to understand who was meant: it was what Philip King had been mostly styled since his brother's death. Charlotte Delves came forward as Duff was speaking. Duff

took off his felt hat in deference to her, and explained.

She turned as white as a sheet—white as George Heneage had looked—and sat down on a chair. Duff had not mentioned George Heneage's name, only Mr. Edwin Barley's: perhaps she thought it was the latter who had fired the shot.

“It must have been an accident, Duff. They are so careless with their guns!”

“No, ma'am, it was murder! Leastways, that's what they are saying.”

“He cannot be dead.”

“He's as dead as a door-nail!” affirmed Duff, with decision. “I can't be mistaken in a dead man. I've seen enough of 'em, father being the grave-digger. They are bringing him on, ma'am, now.”

Even as Duff spoke, sounds of the approach stole on the air from the distance—the measured tread of feet that bear a burden. It came nearer and nearer; and Philip King, or what was left of him, was laid on the large table in the hall. As is the case in some country houses,

the hall was furnished like a plain room. Duff, making ready, had pushed the table close to the window, between the wall and the entrance-door, shutting me into a corner. I sank down on the matting, not daring to move.

“Light the lamp,” said Mr. Edwin Barley.

The news had spread; the servants crowded in; some of the women began to shriek. It became one indescribable scene of confusion, exclamations, and alarm. Mr. Edwin Barley turned round, in anger.

“Clear out, all of you!” he said, roughly. “What do you mean by making this uproar? You men can stay in the barn, you may be wanted,” he added, to the out-door labourers.

They crowded out at the hall-door; the servants disappeared through the opposite one. Mr. Edwin Barley was one who brooked no delay in being obeyed. Miss Delves remained, and she drew near.

“How did it happen?” she asked, in a low voice, that did not sound much like hers.

“Get me some brandy, and a teaspoon!” was Mr. Edwin Barley’s rejoinder. “He is certainly

dead, as I believe ; but we must try restoratives, for all that. Make haste ; bring it in a wine-glass."

She ran into the dining-room, and in the same moment Mrs. Edwin Barley came lightly down the stairs. She had on her dinner-dress, black silk trimmed with crape, no ornaments yet, and her lovely light hair was hanging down on her bare neck. The noise, as it appeared, had disturbed her in the midst of dressing.

"What is all this disturbance?" she began, as she tripped across the hall, and it was the first intimation Mr. Edwin Barley had of her presence. He might have arrested her, had there been time ; but she was bending over the table too soon. Believing, as she said afterwards, that it was a load of game lying there, it must have been a great shock ; the grey-and-brown woollen plaid they had flung over him, from the neck downwards, looking not unlike the colour of partridge feathers in the dim light. There was no gas in the house ; oil was burnt in the hall and passages—wax-candles in the sitting-rooms.

"It is Philip King !" she cried, with a sort of

shriek. "What is the matter? What is amiss with him?"

"Don't you see what it is?" returned Mr. Edwin Barley, who was all this while chafing the poor cold hands. "He has been shot in the chest; marked out in the wood, and shot down like a dog."

A cry of dread—of fear—broke from her. She began to tremble violently. "How was it done, Edwin? Who did it?"

"You."

"I!" came from her ashy lips. "Are you going mad, Edwin Barley?"

"Selina, this is as surely the result of your work as though you had actually drawn the trigger. I hope you are satisfied with it!"

"How can you be so cruel?" she asked, her bosom heaving, her breath bursting from her in gasps.

He had spoken to her in a low, calm tone—not an angry one. It changed to sorrow now.

"I thought harm would come of it; I have thought so these two days; not, however, such harm as this. You have been urging that fellow

a little too much against this defenceless ward and relative of mine ; but I could not have supposed he would carry it on to murder. Philip King would have died quite soon enough without that, Selina ; he was following Reginald with galloping strides.”

Charlotte Delves returned with a tea-spoon and the brandy in a wine-glass. As is sure to be the case in an emergency, there had been an unavoidable delay. The spirit-stand was not in its place, and for a minute or two she had been unable to find it. Mr. Edwin Barley took up a teaspoonful. His wife drew away.

“ Was it an accident, or—or—done deliberately ?” inquired Charlotte Delves, as she stood there, holding the glass.

“ It was deliberate murder !”

“ Duff said so. But who did it ?”

“ It is of no use, Charlotte,” was all the reply Mr. Barley made, as he gave her back the tea-spoon. “ He is quite dead.”

Hasty footsteps were heard running along the avenue, and up the steps to the door. They proved to be those of Mr. Lowe, the surgeon from Hallam.

“ I was walking over to Smith’s to dinner, Mr. Edwin Barley, and met one of your labourers coming for me,” he exclaimed, in a loud tone, as he entered. “ He said some accident had happened to young King.”

“ Accident enough,” said Mr. Edwin Barley. “ Here he lies.”

For a few moments nothing more was said. Mr. Lowe was stooping over the table.

“ I was trying to give him some brandy when you came in.”

“ He’ll never take brandy or anything else again,” was the reply of Mr. Lowe. “ He is dead.”

“ As I feared. Was as sure of it, in fact, as a non-professional man can well be. I believe that he died in the wood, a minute after the shot struck him.”

“ How did it happen?” asked the surgeon. “ These young fellows are so careless !”

“ I’ll tell you all I know,” said Mr. Barley. “ We had been out shooting—he, I, and Heneage, with the two keepers. He and Heneage were not upon good terms ; they were sour with each

other as could be ; had been cross and crabbed all day. Coming home, Heneage dropped us ; whether to go forward, or to lag behind, I am unable to say. After that, we met Smith—as he can tell you, if you are going to his house. He stopped me about that right-of-common business, and began discussing what would be our better mode of proceeding against the fellows. Philip King, whom it did not interest, said he should go on, and Smith and I sat down on the bench outside the beershop, and called for a pint of cider. Half-an-hour we may have sat there, and then I started for home through the wood, which cuts off the corner——”

“ Philip King having gone forward, did you say ? ” interrupted the surgeon.

“ Yes. I was nearly through the wood, when I heard a slight movement near me, and then a gun was fired. A terrible scream—the scream of a man, Lowe—succeeded in an opposite direction. I pushed through the trees, and saw Philip King. He had leaped up with the shot, and was then falling to the ground. I went to his succour, and asked who had done it. ‘ George

Heneage,' was his answer. He had seen him raise his gun, take aim, and fire upon him."

Crouching down there on the matting, trembling though I was, an impulse prompted me to interrupt: to say that Mr. Edwin Barley's words went beyond the truth. All that Philip King had said was, that he saw George Heneage, saw him stand there. But fear was more powerful than impulse, and I remained silent. How could I dare contradict Mr. Edwin Barley?

"It must have been an accident," said Mr. Lowe. "Heneage must have aimed at a bird."

"There's no doubt that it was deliberate murder!" replied Mr. Edwin Barley. "My ward affirmed it to me with his dying lips. They were his own words. I expressed a doubt, as you are doing. 'It was Heneage,' he said; 'I tell it you with my dying lips.' A bad man!—a villain!" Mr. Barley emphatically added. "Another day or two, and I should have kicked him out of my house; I waited but a decent pretext."

"If he is that, why did you have him in it?" asked the surgeon.

"Because it is but recently that my eyes have

been opened to him and his ways. This poor fellow," pointing to the dead, "lifted their scales for me in the first instance. Pity the other is not the one to be lying here!"

Sounds of hysterical emotion were heard on the stairs: they came from Mrs. Edwin Barley. It appeared that she had been sitting on the lowest step all this while, her face bent on her knees, and must have heard what passed. Mr. Barley, as if wishing to offer an apology for her, said she had just looked on Philip King's face, and it had frightened her much.

Mr. Lowe tried to persuade her to retire from the scene, but she would not, and there she sat on, growing calm by degrees. The surgeon measured something in a teaspoon into a wine-glass, filled it up with cold water, and made her drink it. He then took his leave, saying that he would call again in the course of the evening. Not a minute had he been gone, when Mr. Martin burst into the hall.

"What is this report?" he cried, in agitation. "People are saying that Philip King is killed."

"They might have said murdered," said

Mr. Edwin Barley. "Heneage shot him in the wood."

"Heneage!"

"Heneage. Took aim, and fired at him, and killed him. There never was a case of more deliberate murder."

That Mr. Edwin Barley was actuated by intense animus as he said this, the tone proved.

"Poor fellow!" said the clergyman, gently, as he leaned over him and touched his face. "I have seen for some days they were not cordial. What ill-blood could have been between them?"

"Heneage had better explain that when he makes his defence," said Mr. Edwin Barley, grimly.

"It is but a night or two ago that we were speculating on his health, upon his taking a profession; we might have spared ourselves the pains, poor lad. I asked you, who was his heir-at-law, little thinking another would so soon inherit."

Mr. Edwin Barley made no reply.

"Why—good heavens!—is that Mrs. Barley

sitting there?" he inquired, in a low tone, as his eyes fell on the distant stairs.

"She won't move away. These things do terrify women. Don't notice her, Martin: she will be better left to herself."

"Upon my word, this is a startling and sudden blow," resumed the clergyman, again recurring to the death. "But you must surely be mistaken in calling it murder."

"There's no mistake about it: it was wilful murder. I am as sure of it as though I had seen the aim taken," persisted Mr. Barley. "And I will pursue Heneage to the death."

"Have you secured him? If it really is murder, he must answer for it. Where is he?"

Mr. Barley spoke a passionate word. It was a positive fact—account for it, anyone that can—that until that moment he had never given a thought to the securing of George Heneage. "What a fool I have been!" he exclaimed, "what an idiot! He has had time to escape."

"He cannot have escaped far."

"Stay here, will you, Martin. I'll send the

labourers after him; he may be hiding in the wood until the night's darker."

Mr. Edwin Barley hastened from the hall, and the clergyman bent over the table again. I had my face turned to him, and was scarcely conscious, until it had passed, of something dark that glided from the back of the hall, and followed Mr. Barley out. With him gone, to whom I had taken so unaccountable a dislike and dread, it was my favourable moment for escape; I seemed to fear him more than poor Philip King on the table. But nervous terror held possession of me still, and in moving I cried out in spite of myself. The clergyman looked round.

"I declare it is little Miss Hereford!" he said, very kindly, as he took my hand. "What brought you there, my dear?"

I sobbed out the explanation. That I had been pushed into the corner by the table, and was afraid to move. "Don't tell, sir, please! Mr. Edwin Barley might be angry with me. Don't tell him I was there."

"He would not be angry at a little girl's very

natural fears," answered Mr. Martin, stroking my hair. "But I will not tell him. Will you stay by your aunt, Mrs. Edwin Barley?"

"Yes, please, sir."

"But where *is* Mrs. Barley?" he resumed, as he led me towards the stairs.

"I was wondering, too," interposed Charlotte Delves, who stood at the dining-room door. "A minute ago she was still sitting there. I turned into the room for a moment, and when I came back she was gone."

"She must have gone up-stairs, Miss Delves."

"I suppose she has, Mr. Martin," was Miss Delves's reply. But a thought came over me that it must have been Mrs. Edwin Barley who had glided out at the hall-door.

And, in point of fact, it was. She was sought for up-stairs, and could not be found; she was sought for down-stairs, all in vain. Whither had she gone? On what errand was she bent? One of those raw, damp fogs, prevalent in the autumn months, had come on, making the air wet, as if with rain, and she had no out-door

things on, no bonnet, and her black silk dress had a low body and short sleeves. Was she with her husband, searching the wood for George Heneage?

The dark oak-door that shut out the passage leading to the domains of the servants was pushed open, and Jemima's head appeared at it. I ran and laid hold of her.

"Oh, Jemima, let me stay by you!"

"Hark!" she whispered, putting her arm round me. "There are horses galloping up to the house."

Two police-officers, mounted. They gave their horses in charge to one of the men-servants, and came into the hall, the scabbards of their swords clanking against the steps.

"I don't like the look of them," whispered Jemima. "Let us go away."

She took me to the kitchen. Sarah, Mary, and the cook were in it; the latter a tall, stout woman, with a rosy colour and black eyes. Her chief concern seemed to be for the dinner.

"Look here," she exclaimed to Jemima, as she stood over her saucepans, "everything's a-spiling.

Who's to know whether they'll have it served in one hour or in two?"

"I should think they wouldn't have it served at all," returned Jemima: "that sight in the hall's enough dinner for them to-day, one would suppose. The police are come now."

"Ah, it is bad, I know," said the cook. "And the going to look at it took everything else out of my head, worse luck to me! I forgot my soles were on the fire, and when I got back they were burnt to the pan. I've had to skin 'em now, and put 'em into wine sauce. Who's this coming in?"

It was Miss Delves. The cook appealed to her about the dinner.

"It won't be eatable, ma'am, if it's kept much longer. Some of the dishes is half cold, and some's dried up to a scratchin'."

"There's no help for it, cook; you must manage it in the best way you can," was Miss Delves's reply. "It is a dreadful thing to have happened, but I suppose dinner must be served all the same for the master and Mrs. Edwin Barley."

"Miss Delves, is it true what they are saying

—that it was Mr. Heneage who did it?" inquired Sarah.

"Suppose you trouble yourself with your own affairs, and let alone what does not concern you," was Miss Delves's reprimand.

She left the kitchen. Jemima made a motion of contempt after her, and gave the door a bang.

"She'll put in *her* word against Mr. Heneage, I know; for she didn't like him. But I am confident it was never he that did it—unless his gun went off accidental."

For full an hour by the clock we stayed in the kitchen, uninterrupted, the cook reducing herself to a state of despair over the uncalled-for dinner. The men-servants had been sent out, some to one place, some to another. The cook served us some coffee and bread-and-butter, but I don't think any one of us touched the latter. I thought by that time my aunt must surely have come in, and asked Jemima to take me up stairs to her. A policeman was in the hall as we passed across the back of it, and Charlotte Delves and Mr. Martin were sitting in the dining-room, the door open. Mrs. Edwin Barley was nowhere to be

found, and we went back to the kitchen. I began to cry; a dreadful fear came upon me that she might have gone away for ever, and left me to the companionship of Mr. Edwin Barley.

“Come and sit down here, child,” said the cook, in a motherly way, as she placed a low stool near the fire. “It’s enough to frighten her, poor little stranger, to have this happen, just as she comes into the house.”

“I say, though, where can the mistress be!” Jemima said to her, in a low tone, as I drew the stool into the shade and sat down, leaning my head against the wall.

Presently Miss Delves’s bell rang. The servants said they always knew her ring—it came with a jerk. Jemima went to answer it. It was for some hot water, which she took up. Somebody was going to have brandy-and-water, she said; perhaps Mr. Martin—she did not know. Her master was in the hall then, and Mr. Barley, of the Oaks, was with him.

“Who’s Mr. Barley of the Oaks, Jemima?” I asked.

“He is master’s elder brother, miss. He lives

at the Oaks, about three miles from here. Such a nice place it is—ten times better than this. When the old gentleman died, Mr. Barley came into the Oaks, and Mr. Edwin into this.”

Then there was silence again for another half hour. I sat with my eyes closed, and heard them say I was asleep. The young farm labourer, Duff, came in at last.

“Well,” said he, “it have been a useless chase. I wonder whether I am wanted for anything else.”

“Where have you been?” asked Jemima.

“Scouring the wood, seven of us, in search of Mr. Heneage: and them two mounted police is a-dashing about the roads. We haven’t found him.”

“Duff, Mr. Heneage no more did it than you did.”

“That’s all you know about it,” was Duff’s answer. “Master says he did.”

“Have a cup of coffee, Duff?” asked the cook.

“Thank ye,” said Duff. “I’d be glad on’t.”

She was placing the cup before him, when he suddenly leaned forward from the chair he had taken, speaking in a covert whisper.

“ I say, who do you think was in the wood, a-scouring it, up one path and down another, as much as ever we was ?”

“ Who ?” asked the servants in a breath.

“ The young missis. She hadn’t got an earthly thing on her but just what she sits in, indoors. Her hair was down, and her neck and arms was bare ; and there she was, a-racing up and down like one demented.”

“ Tush !” said the cook. “ You must have seen double. What should bring young madam dancing about the wood, Duff, at this time o’ night ?”

“ I tell ye I see her. I see her three times over. Maybe she was looking for Mr. Heneage, too. At any rate, there she was, and with nothing on, as if she’d started out in a hurry, and had forgot to dress herself. And if she don’t catch a cold, it’s odd to me,” added Duff. “ The fog’s as thick as pea-soup, and wets you worse than rain. ’Twas enough to give her her death.”

Duff’s report was true. As he spoke, a bell called Jemima up again. She came back, laid hold of me without speaking, and took me to the

drawing-room. Mrs. Edwin Barley stood there, just come in : she was shaking like a leaf, with the damp and cold, her hair dripping wet. When she had seen her husband leave the hall in search of George Heneage, an impulse came over her to follow and interpose between the anger of the two, should they meet. At least, partly this, partly to look after George Heneage herself, and warn him to escape. She gave me this explanation openly.

“I could not find him,” she said, kneeling down before the fire, and holding out her shivering arms to the blaze. “I hope and trust he has escaped. One man’s life is enough for me to have upon my hands, without having two.”

“Oh, Aunt Selina ! *you* did not take Philip King’s life !”

“No, I did not take it. And I have been guilty of no intentional wrong. But I did set the one against the other, Anne—in my vanity and wilfulness.”

Looking back to the child’s eyes with which I saw things then, and judging of these same things with my woman’s experience now, I can

but hold Selina Barley entirely to blame. An indulged daughter, born when her sister Ursula was nearly grown, she had been suffered to have her own way at Keppe-Carew, and grew up to think the world was made for her. Dangerously attractive, fond to excess of admiration, she had probably encouraged Philip King's boyish fancy, and then turned round upon him for it. At the previous Easter, on his former visit, she had been all smiles and sweetness; this time she had done nothing but turn him into ridicule. "What is sport to you may be death to me," says the fly to the spider. It might not have mattered so much from *her*, this ridicule; but she pressed George Heneage into the service: and Philip King was not of a disposition to bear it tamely. His weak health made him appear somewhat of a coward; he was not strong enough to take the law into his own hands, and repay Mr. Heneage with personal chastisement. Selina's liking for George Heneage was no doubt great; but it was not an improper liking, although the world—the little world at Mr. Edwin Barley's—might have wished to deem it so. Before she married Mr. Edwin

Barley, she refused George Heneage, and laughed at him for proposing to her. She should wed a rich man, she told him, or none at all. It was Mr. Edwin Barley himself who invited Heneage to his house, and also Philip King, as it most unfortunately happened. His wife, in her wilful folly—I had almost written her wilful wickedness—played them off, one upon another. The first day they met, Philip King took umbrage at some remark of Mr. Heneage's, and Selina, liking the one, and disliking the other, forthwith began. A few days on, and young King so far forgot his good manners as to tell her she "liked that Coxcomb Heneage too much." The reproach made her laugh; but she, nevertheless, out of pure mischief, did what she could to confirm Philip King in the impression. He, Philip King, took to talk of this to Miss Delves; he took to watch Selina and George Heneage; there could be little doubt that he carried tales of his observation to Mr. Edwin Barley, which only incited Selina to persevere; the whole thing amused her immensely. What passed between Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Barley, in private about it, whether

anything or nothing, was never known. At the moment of the accident he was exceedingly vexed with her; *incensed* may be the proper word.

And poor Philip King! perhaps, after all, his death may have been a mistake—if it was in truth George Heneage that it proceeded from. Circumstances, as they came out, seemed to say that he had not been “spying,” but only taking the short cut through the summer-house on his way home from shooting; an unusual route, it’s true, but not an impossible one. Seeing them on the other side when he entered it, he waited until they should proceed onwards; but Mrs. Barley’s sudden run up the steps sent him away. Not that he would avoid them; only make his escape, without their seeing him, lest he should be accused of the very thing they did accuse him of—spying. But he was too late; the creaking of the outer door betrayed him. At least this was the opinion taken up by Mr. Martin, later, when Selina told the whole truth to him, under the seal of secrecy.

But Mrs. Edwin Barley was kneeling before

the fire in the drawing-room, with her dripping hair; and I standing by her, looking on; and that first terrible night was not over.

"Selina, why did you stay out in the wet fog?"

"I was looking for him, I tell you, Anne."

"But you had nothing on. You might have caught your death, Duff said."

"And what if I had?" she sharply interrupted. "I'd as soon die as live."

It was one of her customary random retorts, meaning nothing. Before more was said, strange footsteps and voices were heard on the stairs. Selina started up, and looked at herself in the glass.

"I can't let them see me like this," she muttered, clutching her drooping hair. "You wait here, Anne."

Darting to the side-door she had spoken of as leading to her bedroom, she pulled it open with a wrench, as if a bolt had given way, and disappeared, leaving me standing on the hearth-rug.

CHAPTER IV.

VERY ILL.

HE who first entered the room was a gentleman of middle age and size. His complexion was healthy and ruddy ; his short dark hair, sprinkled with gray, was combed down upon the forehead ; his countenance was good-natured and simple. This was Mr. Barley of the Oaks. Not the least resemblance did he bear to his brother. Following him was one in an official dress, who was probably superior to a common policeman, for his manners were good, and Mr. Barley called him " Sir." It was not the same who had been in the hall.

" Oh, this—this must be the little girl," observed Mr. Barley. " Are you Mrs. Edwin's niece, my dear—Miss Hereford ?"

" Yes, sir."

" Do you know where she is ?"

“In her bedroom, I think, sir.”

It had transpired that a quarrel had taken place the previous Friday between Mr. Heneage and Philip King ; and the officer had now been in the kitchen to question Jemima. Jemima disclaimed all knowledge of the affair, beyond the fact that she had heard of it from little Miss Hereford, whom she saw on the stairs, crying and frightened. He had now come to question me.

“Now, my little maid, try and recollect,” said the officer, drawing me to him. “What did they quarrel about?”

“I don’t know, sir,” I answered. And I spoke the literal truth, for I had not understood at the time.

“Can you not recollect?”

“I can recollect,” I said, looking at him, and feeling that I did not shrink from him, though he was a policeman. “Mr. King seemed to have done something wrong, for Mr. Heneage was angry with him, and called him a spy ; but I did not know what it was that he had done. I was too frightened to listen ; I ran out of the room.”

“Then you did not hear what the quarrel was about?”

“I did not understand, sir. Except that they said that Mr. King was mean, and a spy.”

“They!” he repeated, catching me up quickly; “who else was in the room?”

“My Aunt Selina.”

“Then she took Mr. Heneage’s part?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How did the quarrel end? Amicably, or in evil feeling?”

“I don’t know, sir. I went away, and stayed in my bedroom.”

“My sister-in-law, Mrs. Edwin, may be able to tell you more about it, as she was present,” interposed Mr. Barley.

“I dare say she can,” was the officer’s reply. “It seems a curious thing altogether—that two gentlemen should be visiting at a house, and one should shoot the other. How long had they been staying here?”

“Let’s see,” said Mr. Barley, rubbing his forefinger upon his forehead. “It must be a

month, I fancy, sir, since they came. Heneage was here first; some days before Philip."

"Were they acquainted previously?"

"I—think—not," said Mr. Barley, speaking with hesitation. "Heneage was here on a short visit in the middle of the summer, but not Philip: whereas Philip was here at Easter, and the other was not. No, sir, I believe they were not acquainted before, but my brother can tell you."

"Who is this Mr. Heneage?"

"Don't you know? He is the son of the member for Wexborough. Oh, he is of very good family—very. A sad blow it will be for them, if things turn out as black as they look. Will he get clear off, think you?"

"You may depend upon it, he would not have got off far, but for this confounded fog that has come on," warmly replied the police-officer. "We shall have him to-morrow, no doubt."

"I never hardly saw such a fog at this time of year," observed Mr. Barley. "I couldn't see a yard before me as I came along. Upon my word, it almost seems as if it had come on purpose to screen him."

“ Was he a pleasant man, this Heneage?”

“ One of the nicest fellows you ever met, sir,” was Mr. Barley’s impulsive reply. “ The last week or two Edwin seems to have taken some spite against him ; I don’t know what was up between them, for my part : but I liked Heneage, what I saw of him, and thought him an uncommon good fellow. Mrs. Edwin Barley has known him a long while ; my brother only recently. They all met in London last spring.”

“ Heneage derives no benefit in any way, by property or otherwise, from his death ?” observed the policeman, speaking half as a question, half as a soliloquy.

“ It’s not likely, sir. The only person to benefit is my brother. He comes in for it all.”

The officer raised his eyes. “ Your brother comes in for young King’s fortune, Mr. Barley ?”

“ Yes, he does. And I’ll be bound he never gave a thought to the inheriting of it. How should he, from a young and hearty lad like Philip ? Edwin has croaked over Philip’s health of late, said he was consumptive, and going the

way of his brother Reginald ; but I saw nothing amiss with Philip."

"May I ask why you don't inherit, Mr. Barley, being the eldest brother?"

"He was no blood relation to me. My father married twice, I was the son of the first wife ; Edwin of the second ; and Philip King's father and Edwin's mother were cousins. Philip had no male relative living but my brother, therefore he comes in for the estate."

Mrs. Edwin Barley appeared at the door, and paused there, as if listening to the conclusion of the last sentence. Mr. Barley turned and saw her, and she came forward. She had twisted up her damp hair, and thrown on a shawl of white China crape. Her eyes were brilliant, her cheeks carmine—beautiful she looked altogether.

The officer questioned her as to the cause of the quarrel which she had been present at, but she would give him no satisfactory answer. She "could not remember;" "Philip King was in the wrong, she knew that;" "the officer must excuse her talking, for her head ached, and her brain felt confused." Such was the substance—

all, in fact, that he could get from her. He bowed and withdrew, and Mr. Barley followed him down stairs, Selina bolting the door after them.

"Now, Anne, I must have a little conversation with you," she said, drawing me to her as she sat on the low ottoman. And I could see that she shivered still. She proceeded to question me of what had occurred after I left her at the summer-house. I told her; and had got to where Philip King was shot, when she interrupted.

"Good heavens, child! you *saw* him shot?"

"I heard the noise, and saw him fall. It seemed to come from the spot where he had been gazing."

"Did you see who did it?" she asked, scarcely above her breath.

"No."

"Then you saw no one about but Philip King?"

"I saw Mr. Edwin Barley. He was near the spot from whence the shot seemed to come, looking through the trees and standing still, as if he wondered what could be amiss. For, oh,

Selina ! Philip King's scream was dreadful, and must have been heard a long way."

My aunt caught hold of my arm in a sort of fright. "Anne ! what do you say ? You saw *Edwin Barley* at that spot ! Not Mr. Heneage ?"

"I did not see Mr. Heneage at all then. I saw only Mr. Edwin Barley. He came up to Philip King, asking what was the matter."

"Had he his gun with him — Edwin Barley ?"

"Yes, he was carrying it."

She dropped my arm, and sat quite still, shrinking as if some blow had struck her. Two or three minutes passed before she spoke again.

"Go on, Anne. What next ? Tell me all that passed, for I suppose you heard." And I related what I knew, word for word.

"You have not told me all, Anne."

"Yes, I have."

"Did not Philip King say that Mr. Heneage had raised his gun, aimed at him, and fired ?—that he saw him do it ?"

"He did not, aunt. He only said what I have told you."

"Lie the first!" she exclaimed, lifting her hand and letting it fall passionately. "Then you never saw Mr. Heneage?"

"I saw him later." And I went on to tell her of the meeting him through my taking the wrong turning. I told her all: how he looked like one in mortal fright; what he said; and of my asking him whether he had done it.

"Well?" she feverishly interrupted. "Well?"

"He quite denied it," I answered, repeating to her exactly the words Mr. Heneage had said.

"You say he looked scared—confused?"

"Yes, very much so."

"And Mr. Edwin Barley—did he?"

"Not at all. He looked just as he always looks. He seemed to be surprised, and very sorry; his voice, when he spoke to Philip King, was kinder than I ever heard it."

Another pause. She seemed to be thinking.

"I can hardly understand where it was you saw George Heneage, Anne; you must show me, to-morrow. Was it on the same side from which the shot came?"

“Yes ; I think near to the place. Or how could he have heard Mr. Barley speak to me ?”

“How long had you been in the wood when the shot was fired ?”

“About ten minutes or a quarter of an hour.”

“Little girls compute time differently from grown people, Anne. A few minutes might seem like a quarter of an hour to you.”

“Mamma taught me how differently time appears to pass, according to what we may be doing, Aunt Selina. That when we are pleasantly occupied, it seems to fly ; and when we are impatient for it to go on, or in any suspense or fear, it does not seem to move. I think I have learnt to be pretty exact, and I do believe that I was in the wood nearly a quarter of an hour. I was running about for some time, looking for Mr. Heneage, as you told me, before I found I had lost myself. And then I was some minutes getting over the fright. I had said my prayers, and——”

“You had—WHAT ?”

“I was much alarmed ; I thought I might

have to stay in the wood until morning, and I could only pray to God to protect me: I knew that harm would not come to me then. It must have been a quarter of an hour in all: so you see Mr. Heneage did not do it in the heat of passion, in running after him: he must have done it deliberately."

"I don't care," she repeated to herself, in a sort of defiant voice; "I know George Heneage did not wilfully shoot Philip King. If he did do it, it was an accident; but I don't believe he did."

"If he did not, why did he hide in the wood, and look as if he had done something wrong, Selina? Why did he not go boldly up, and see what was amiss with Philip King, as Mr. Edwin Barley did?"

"There is no accounting for what people do in these moments of confusion and terror: some act in one way, some in another," she said, slowly. "Anne, I don't like to speak out openly to you—what I fear and what I don't fear. It was imperative upon George Heneage to hasten home—and he may not have believed that Philip King was really dead."

“ But, Selina——”

“ Go ! go ! lie down there,” she said, drawing me to the distant sofa, and pushing me on it, with the pillow over my head. “ You are asleep, mind ! He might think I had been tutoring you.”

So sudden and unexpected was the movement, I could only obey, and lie still. Selina unbolted the door, and was back in her seat before Mr. Edwin Barley entered the room.

“ Are you coming down to dinner, Selina ?”

“ Dinner ! It is well for you that you can eat it,” was her answer. “ You must dine without me to-day—those who dine at all. Now, don’t disturb that sleeping child, Mr. Barley ! I was just going to send her to bed.”

“ It might do you more good to eat dinner than to roam about in a night-fog,” was Mr. Edwin Barley’s rejoinder. “ It is rather curious you should choose such a night as this to be out, half-naked.”

“ Not curious,” she said, coldly : “ very natural.”

“ Very ! Especially that you should be tearing

up and down the wood paths, like a mad woman. Others saw you as well as myself, and are speaking of it."

"Let them speak."

"But for what purpose were you there?"

"I was looking for George Heneage. There! you may make the most of it."

"Did you find him?"

"No. I wish I had: *I wish I had*. I should have learnt from him the truth of this night's business; for the truth, as I believe, has not come to light yet."

"What do you suppose to be the truth?" he returned, in a tone of surprise; whether natural, or assumed, who could say?

"No matter—no matter now: it is something that I scarcely dare to glance at. Better, even, that Heneage had done it, than—than—what I am thinking of. My head is confused to-night," she broke off; "my mind unhinged—hardly sane. You had better leave me, Mr. Barley."

"You had better come and eat a bit of dinner," he said, roughly, but not unkindly. "None of us can touch much, I dare say, but

we are going to sit down. William is staying, and so is Martin. Won't you come and try to take a bit? Or shall I send you something up?"

"It would be of no use."

Mr. Edwin Barley looked at her: she was shivering outwardly and inwardly. I could just see out under the corner of the cushion.

"You have caught a violent cold, Selina. How could you think of going out?"

"I will tell you," she added, in a more conciliating spirit. "I went out because you went. To prevent any encounter between you and George Heneage,—I mean any violence. After that, I stayed looking for him."

"You need not have feared violence from me. I should have handed him over to the police, nothing more."

There was a mocking sound in his voice as he spoke. Selina sat down and put her feet on the fender.

"I hate to dine without somebody at the table's head," Mr. Edwin Barley said, turning to the door. "If you will not come, I shall ask Charlotte Delves to sit down."

“It is nothing to me who sits down when I am not there.”

He departed with the ungracious reply ringing in his ears: and ungracious I felt it to be. She bolted the door again, and pulled the blue velvet cushion off my head.

“Are you smothered, child? Get up. Now, mark me: you must not say a word to Mr. Edwin Barley of what happened at the summer-house. Do not mention it at all—to him, or to any one else.”

“But suppose I am asked, Selina?”

“How can you be asked. Philip King is gone, poor fellow; George Heneage is not here, and who else is there to ask you? You surely have not spoken of it already?” she continued, in a tone of alarm.

I had not spoken of it to any one, and told her so. Jemima had questioned me as to the cause of my terror, when I ran in from the wood, and I said I had heard a shot and a scream; I had not courage to say more.

“That’s well,” said Selina.

She sent me to rest, ordering Jemima to

stay by me until I was asleep. "The child may feel nervous," she remarked to her, in an undertone, but the words reached me. And I suppose Jemima felt nervous, for one of the other maids came too.

The night passed ; the morning came, Sunday, and with it illness for Mrs. Edwin Barley. I gathered from Jemima's conversation while she was dressing me, that Selina had slept alone : Mr. Edwin Barley, with his brother, and some more gentlemen, had been out a great part of the night looking for George Heneage. It was so near morning when they got back that he would not go to his wife's room for fear of disturbing her.

I ran in when I went downstairs. She lay in bed, and her voice, as she spoke to me, did not sound like her own.

"Are you ill, Selina ? Why do you speak so hoarsely ?"

"I feel very ill, Anne. My throat is bad—or my chest, I can scarcely tell which : perhaps it is both. Go down stairs, and send Miss Delves to me."

I have said that I was an imaginative, thoughtful, excitable child, and as I hastened to obey her, one sole recollection (I could have said fear) kept running through my brain. It was the oracular observation made by Duff, relating to his mistress and the fog: "It's enough to give her her death!" Suppose she *had* caught her death? My fingers, fastening my narrow waist-band, trembled at the thought.

The first thing I saw when I went down was a large high screen of many folds, raised across the hall, shutting out part of it from view. It seemed to strike me back with fear. Sarah was coming out of the dining-room with a duster in her hand: it was early yet. I caught hold of her gown.

"Sarah, what is behind there?"

"The same that was last night, miss," she answered. "Nothing is to be moved until the coroner has come."

"Have they taken Mr. Heneage?"

"Not that I have heard of, miss. One of the police was in just now, and he told Miss Delves there was no news."

"I want to find Miss Delves. Where is she?"

"In master's study. You can go in. Don't you know which it is? It's that room built out at the back, half-way up the first flight of stairs. You can see the door from here."

In the study sat Mr. Barley and Mr. Edwin Barley at breakfast, Charlotte Delves serving them. I gave her my aunt's message, but was nearly scared out of my senses at being laid hold of by Mr. Edwin Barley.

"Go up at once, Charlotte, and see what it is," he said. "How do you say, little one—that her throat is bad?"

"Yes, sir; she cannot speak well."

"No wonder; she has only herself to thank," he muttered, as Charlotte Delves left the room. "The wonder would be if she were not ill."

"Why?" asked Mr. Barley, curiously, lifting his head.

"Oh, she got frightened last night when poor Philip was brought in, and ran out in the fog after me with nothing on."

He released my arm, and Mr. Barley put a

chair for me beside him, and gave me some breakfast. I had taken quite a liking to him, he was so simple and kind. He told me he had no little girls or boys of his own, and his wife was always ill, unable to go out.

"Mrs. Edwin Barley appears exceedingly poorly," said Charlotte Delves, when she returned. "Lowe said he should be here this morning; he shall see her when he comes. She must have taken cold."

Scarcely had she spoken when the surgeon arrived. Mr. Edwin Barley went up-stairs with him. Mr. Lowe came down alone afterwards, and I caught a moment to speak to him when no one was listening.

"Will my aunt Selina get well, sir?"

"I do not know, my dear," he answered, turning upon me his grave face. "I fear she is going to be very ill."

Sunday came to an end; oh, such a dull day it had seemed!—and Monday morning dawned. It was Selina's birth-day: she was twenty-one.

Nothing could be heard of George Heneage. The police scoured the country; handbills were

printed, offering a reward for his apprehension ; no effort was left untried, but he was not found. Opinions were freely bandied about : some said he must have escaped in the fog, and got off by the railway from Nettleby, or by the other line beyond Hallam ; others thought he was lying concealed near the spot still. Mr. Edwin Barley was in great anger at his escape, and avowed he would pursue him to the death.

Not on this day, but the following one, Tuesday, Mr. Heneage's father came to the house—a fine old gentleman, with white hair. Mr. Lowe corrected me for calling him old, and said he could not be much more than fifty. I had not then the experience to know that while young people call fifty old, those past that age are apt to style it young. I saw him twice as he went along the passages, but was not close to him. He was a courteous, gentlemanly man, but seemed bowed down with grief. It was said he could not understand the calamity at all, and decidedly refused to believe in his son's guilt. If the shot had in truth proceeded from him, the gun must have gone off by accident.

“Then why should he run away?” argued Mr. Edwin Barley.

He stayed in the house altogether but about two hours, and had an interview with Mrs. Edwin Barley in her bedroom before his departure. Refreshments were laid for him, but he declined to touch anything: I heard the servants commenting on it.

In the afternoon the coroner’s inquest sat. It was held in the dining-room. The chief witness was Mr. Edwin Barley. I was not called upon, and Selina said it was a proof that he had not mentioned I was present at the time. You may be sure *I* took care not to mention it; neither did she. Nothing transpired touching the encounter at the summer-house; therefore the affair appeared to the public involved in mystery. Mr. Edwin Barley protested that it was a mystery to him. He could not conceive what motive Heneage could have had in taking Philip King’s life. Mr. Edwin Barley testified that Philip King, in dying, had asserted he saw George Heneage take aim and fire at him, and there was nobody to contradict the assertion. I knew

Philip King had not said so much ; but no one else knew it, save Mrs. Edwin Barley, and she only from me. They did not require her to appear at the inquest : it was assumed that she knew nothing whatever about the transaction.

Charlotte Delves was called, at the request of the jury, because Philip King had sat with her in her parlour for half an hour the morning of his death ; but she proved that he had not touched upon anything unpleasant, or spoken then of George Heneage. The feeling between them had not been good, she testified, and there used to be bickering and disputes. "What about?" asked the jury ; but Miss Delves only answered that she "could not say." The fact was, Mr. Edwin Barley in his stern way had ordered her not to bring in his wife's name.

While the inquest was sitting I stayed in Selina's room. She seemed very restless, turning about in bed continually, and telling me to listen how it was "going on." But I could hear nothing, though I went often on the stairs to try.

"What was that stir just now, Anne?" she asked, when it was late.

“They called from the dining-room to have the chandelier lighted. John went in and did it.”

“Is it dark, Anne?”

“Not dark. It is getting dark.”

Dark it appeared to be in the chamber, for the crimson silk curtains were drawn before the large, deep bay-window, and also partially round the bed. You could distinguish the outline of objects, and that was all. I went close up to the bed and looked at her; she was buried in the pillows: that she was very ill I knew, for a physician from Nettleby had come that morning with Mr. Lowe.

“I think it must be over,” she said, as a bustle was heard below. “Go and see, dear.”

I went half-way down the stairs in the dark. Nobody had thought to light the hall-lamp. Sure enough, they were pouring out of the room, a crowd of dark figures, talking as they came, and slowly making for the hall-door. Suddenly I distinguished Mr. Edwin Barley coming towards the stairs.

To his study, as I thought, and back went I, not caring to encounter him. Added to my

childish dislike and fear of Mr. Edwin Barley, since Saturday night another impulse to avoid him had been added: a dread, which I could not divest myself of, that he might question me as to that meeting at the summer-house, and to the subsequent interview with George Hencage. Selina had ordered me to be silent; but if he found anything out and questioned me, what could I do? I know that the fear was upon me then and for a long time afterwards.

I crept swiftly back again up the stairs, and into my aunt's room. Surely he was not coming to it! Those were his footsteps, and they drew nearer: he could not have turned into his study! No, they came on. In the impulse of the moment, I pushed behind the heavy window-curtain. It was drawn straight across from wall to wall, leaving a space between it and the bow of the window nearly as large as a small room. There were three chairs there, one in the middle of the window and at the two sides. I sat down on one of them, and, pulling the white blind slightly aside, looked out at the dark figures who were then sauntering down the avenue.

“Well, it’s over,” said Mr. Edwin Barley to his wife, as he came in and shut the door. “And now all the work will be to find him.”

“How has it ended?” she asked.

“Wilful murder. The coroner was about to clear the room, but the jury intimated that they required no deliberation, and returned their verdict at once.”

“Wilful murder against whom?”

“Against George Heneage. Did you suppose it was against you or me?”

There was a pause. I felt in miserable indecision, knowing that I ought, in honour, to go out and show myself, but not daring to do it. Selina resumed, speaking as emphatically as her inflamed throat permitted.

“I cannot believe—I never will believe—that George Heneage was capable of committing murder. His whole nature would rise up against it: as his father said in this room a few hours ago. If the shot did come from his gun, it must have been fired inadvertently.”

“The shot did come from his gun,” returned

Mr. Edwin Barley. "There's no 'if' in the question."

"I am aware you say so ; but it was passing strange that you, also with your gun, should have been upon the spot. Now, stay !—don't put yourself in a passion. I cannot help saying it. I think all this suspense and uncertainty are killing me !"

Mr. Edwin Barley dragged a chair to the side of the bed, anger in the very sound. I felt ready to drop, lest he should see me through the slit in the curtain.

"We will have this out, Selina. It is not the first time you have given utterance to hints that you ought to be ashamed of. Do you suspect that I shot Philip King?"

His tone was so stern that, perhaps, she did not like to say "yes" outright, and tampered with the question.

"Not exactly that. But there's only your word to prove that it was George Heneage. And you know how incensed you have latterly been against him !"

"Who caused me to be incensed ? Why, you."

“There was no real cause. Were it the last words I had to speak, Edwin”—and she burst into tears—“were I dying, I would assert it. I never cared for George Heneage in the way you fancy.”

“*I fancy!* Had I fancied that, I should have flung George Heneage out of my house long ago,” was his rejoinder, spoken calmly. “But now, hear me, Selina. It has been your pleasure to declare so much to me. On my part, I declare to you that Heneage, and Heneage only, killed Philip King. Dispossess your mind of all dark folly. You must be insane, I think, to take it up against your husband.”

“Did you see Heneage fire?” she asked, after a silence.

“No. I should have known pretty surely that it could only be Heneage, had there been no proof against him; but there were Philip’s dying words. Still, I did not see Heneage at the place, and I have never said I did. I was pushing home through the wood, and halted a second, thinking I heard voices: it must have been Philip talking to the child: at that very

moment a shot was fired close to me—close, mind you—not two yards off; but the trees are thick just there, and whoever fired it was hid from my view. I was turning to search, when Philip King's awful scream rang out, and I pushed my head beyond the trees and saw him in the act of falling to the ground. I hastened to him, and the other escaped. This is the entire truth, so far as I am cognizant of it."

It might have been the truth; and, again, it might not. It was just one of those things that depend upon the credibility of the utterer. What little corroboration there was, certainly was on Mr. Edwin Barley's side: *only* that he had asserted more than was true of the dying words of Philip King. If these were the simple facts, the truth, why have added falsehood to them?

"Heneage could have had no motive to take the life of Philip King," argued Mrs. Edwin Barley. "That he would have caned him, or given him some other sound chastisement, I grant you—and richly he deserved it, for he was the

cause of all the ill-feeling that had arisen in the house—but, to kill him! No, no!”

“And yet you would deem me capable of it!”

“I am not accusing you. But when you come to speak of motives, I cannot help seeing that George Heneage could have had none.”

“You have just observed that the author of the mischief, the bad feeling which had sprung up in the house, was Philip King; but you are wrong. The author was you, Selina.”

No answer. She put up one of her hot hands, and shaded her eyes.

“I forgive you,” he continued. “I am willing to bury the past in silence: never to recur to it—never henceforth to allude to it, though the boy was my relative and ward, and I liked him. But I would recommend you to bear this tragical ending in mind, as a warning for the future. I will not tolerate further folly in my wife; and your own sense ought to tell you that had I been ambitious of putting somebody out of the world, it would have been Heneage, not Philip. Heneage has killed him, and upon his head be

the consequences. I will never cease my endeavours to bring him to the drop. I will spare no pains, or energy, or cost, until it is accomplished. So help me, Heaven !”

He rose with the last solemn word, and put the chair back in its place. On his way to the door he turned, speaking in a softer voice.

“Are you better this evening, Selina?”

“Not any. It seems to me that I grow worse with every hour.”

“I’ll send Lowe up to you. He is somewhere about.”

“Oh, aunt, aunt !” I said, going forward with lifted hands and streaming eyes, as he left the chamber, “I was here all the time ! I saw Mr. Edwin Barley coming in, and I hid behind the window-curtain. I never meant to be a listener : I was afraid to come out.”

She looked at me without speaking, and her face, hot with fever, grew more flushed. She seemed to be considering ; perhaps remembering what had passed.

“I—I—don’t think there was anything very

particular said, that you need care ; or, rather, that I need," she said at length. "Was there?"

"No, Selina. Only——"

"Only what, child? Why do you hesitate?"

"You think it might have been Mr. Edwin Barley. I wish I had not heard that."

"I said, or implied, it was as likely to have been he as the other. Anne," she suddenly added, "you possess thought and sense beyond your years : what do you think?"

"I think it was Mr. Heneage. I think so because he has run away, and because he looked so strangely when he was hiding. And I do not think it was Mr. Edwin Barley. When he told you how it occurred just now, and that it was not he, his voice sounded as though he were speaking truth."

"Oh, dear !" she moaned, "I hope it was so ! What a mercy if that Philip King had never come near the house !"

"But, Selina, you are sorry that he is dead?"

"Sorry that he is dead? Of course I am

sorry. What a curious child you are ! He was no favourite of mine ; but," she cried, passionately clasping her hands, " I would give all I am worth to call him back to life."

But I could not be reconciled to what I had done, and sobbed on heavily, until lights and Mr. Lowe came in together.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER DREAM.

“IF ever I heard the like of that! one won’t be able to open one’s lips next before you, Miss Hereford. Did I say anything about her dying, pray? Or about your dying? Or my dying? Time enough to snap me up when I do.”

Thus spoke Jemima, with a volubility that nearly took her breath away. She had come to my room in the morning with the news that Mrs. Edwin Barley was worse. I burst into tears, and asked if she were going to die: which brought forth the above rebuke.

“My thoughts were running upon whether we servants should have mourning given us for young Mr. King,” resumed Jemima, as if she were bent upon removing unpleasant impressions from my mind. “Now just you make haste and dress

yourself, Miss Hereford — Mrs. Edwin Barley has been asking for you.”

I made haste ; Jemima helped ; and she ushered me to the door of the sick-room, halting to whisper a parting word.

“Don’t you begin crying again, miss. Your aunt is no more going to die than I am.”

The first words spoken by Mrs. Edwin Barley were a contradiction to this, curious coincident that it may seem. She was lying very high on the frilled white pillows, no cap on, her cheeks hectic, and her lovely golden hair falling around her head. A large bright fire burned in the grate, and a small tray, with a white cloth and cup on it, stood on the table near.

“Child,” she began, holding out her hand to me, “I fear I am about to be taken from you.”

I did not answer ; I did not cry ; all tears seemed scared away then. It was a confirmation of my secret, inward fears, and my face turned white.

“What was that you said to me about the Keppe-Carews never dying without a warning ? And I laughed at you ! Do you remember ?

Anne, I think the warning came to me last night."

I glanced timidly round the room. It was a luxurious bed-chamber, costly furniture and pretty toilette trifles everywhere. The crimson silk curtains were drawn closely before the bay-window, and I could see Selina clearly in the semi-light.

"Your mamma told you she had a dream, Anne. Well, *I* have had a dream. And yet I feel sure it was not a dream, but reality, reality. She appeared to me last night."

"Who? Mamma?"

"Your mamma. The Keppe-Carew superstition is, that when one is going to die, the last relative, whether near or distant, who has been taken from them by death, comes again to give them notice that their own departure is near. Ursula was the last who went, and she came to me in the night."

"It can't be true," I sobbed, shivering from head to foot.

"She stood there, in the faint rays of the shaded lamp," pursued Selina, not so much as listening to me. "I have not really slept all night; I

have been in that semi-conscious, dozing state when the mind is awake both to dreams and to reality, knowing not which is which. Just before the clock struck two, I awoke partially from one of these semi-dreams, and I saw your mamma at the foot of the bed—a shadowy sort of figure and face, but I knew it for Ursula's. She just looked at me, and said, 'Selina!' Then I woke up thoroughly—the name, the sound of her well-remembered voice ringing in my ears."

"And seeing her?" I eagerly asked.

"No. Seeing nothing but the opening between the curtains at the foot of the bed, and the door beyond it; nothing more than is to be seen now."

"Then, Selina, it was a dream after all?"

"In one sense, yes. The world would call it so. To me it was something more. A minute afterwards the clock struck two, and I was as wide awake as I am now."

The reaction came, and I burst into tears. "Selina! it was a dream; it could only have been a dream!"

"I should no doubt think so, Anne, but for

what you told me of your mamma's warning. But for hearing that, I might never have remembered that such a thing is said to follow the Keppe-Carews."

What with remorse for having told her, though charged by my mother to do it, and what with my own fears, I could not speak for hysterical sobbing.

"You stupid little sensitive thing!" exclaimed Selina, with a touch of her old lightness; "perhaps in a week's time I shall be well, and running about out of doors with you. Go you down to Charlotte Delves's parlour, and get your breakfast, and then come to me again. I want you to go on an errand for me; but don't say so. Mind that, Anne."

"No, no; I'll not say it, Selina."

"Tell them to give you some honey."

They brought the honey and set out other good things for me in Miss Delves's parlour, but I could not eat. Charlotte Delves was very kind. Both the doctors came up the avenue. I watched them into the house; I heard them come down stairs again. The physician from Nettleby

went straight out: Mr. Lowe came to the parlour.

“My dear,” he said to me, “you are to go up to Mrs. Edwin Barley.”

“Is she much worse, sir?” I lingered to ask.

“I can hardly say how she is,” was his answer. “We must hope for the best.”

He stayed in the room himself, and shut the door while he talked to Miss Delves. The hall-clock struck ten as I passed under it, making me start. The hall was clear to-day, and the window and door stood a little open. Jemima told me that Philip King was in a sitting-room at the back, one that was rarely used. I ran quickly up to Selina’s chamber. Mr. Edwin Barley was in it, to my dismay. He turned to leave it when I went in, and put his hand kindly enough upon my hair.

“You look pale, little one; you should run out of doors for a while.”

His wife watched him from the room with her strangely altered eyes, and then beckoned to me.

“Shut the door, and bolt it, Anne.” And

very glad I felt to do it. It was impossible to overcome my fear of Mr. Edwin Barley.

“Do you think you could find your way to Hallam?”

“I dare say I could, aunt.”

“Selina, call me Selina,” she impatiently interposed. “Call it me to the last.”

To the last!

“You remember the way you came from Nettleby, Anne? In going out at the gates by the lodge, Nettleby lies on your left hand, Hallam on your right. You understand?”

“Oh, quite.”

“You have only to turn to the right, and keep straight along the high-road; in a short time you come to Hallam village. The way is not at all lonely; cottages and houses are scattered all along it.”

“I am sure I could go quite easily, Selina.”

“Then put your things on, and take this note,” she said, giving me a little piece of paper twisted up, that she took from under the pillow. “In going down Hallam-street, you will see on the left hand a house standing by itself, with

‘Mr. Gregg, Attorney at Law,’ on a plate on the door. Go in, ask to see Mr. Gregg alone, and give him that note. But mind, Anne, you are not to speak of this to any one. Should Mr. Edwin Barley or any one else meet you, and inquire where you are going, say only that you are walking out. Do you fully understand?”

“Yes.”

“Hide the note, so that no one sees it, and give it into Mr. Gregg’s hands. Tell him I hope he will comprehend it, but that I was too ill to write it more elaborately.”

No one noticed me as I left the house, and I pursued the road to Hallam, my head and thoughts full. Suppose Mr. Edwin Barley *should* meet and question me! I knew that I should make a poor hand at deception: besides being naturally open, mamma had brought me up to be so very candid and truthful. I had crushed the note inside my glove, having no better place of concealment—suppose he should seize my hand and find it! And if the gentleman I was going to see should not be at home, what was I to do

then? Bring the note back to Selina, or leave it? I ought to have asked her.

“Well, my little maid, and where are you off to?”

The salutation proceeded from Mr. Martin, who had come right upon me at a turning of the road. My face grew hot as I answered him.

“I am out for a walk, sir.”

“But this is rather far to come alone. You are close upon Hallam.”

“My Aunt Selina knows it, sir,” I said, trembling lest he should stop me, or order me to walk back with him.

“Oh, very well,” he answered, good-naturedly. “How is she to-day?”

“She is not any better, sir,” I replied. And he left me, telling me I was not to lose myself.

I came to the houses, straggling at first, but soon contiguous to each other, as they are in most streets. Mr. Gregg’s stood alone, its plate on the door. A young man came running out of it as I stood hesitating whether to knock or ring.

“If you please, is Mr. Gregg at home?”

“Yes,” answered he. “He is in the office. You can go in if you want him.”

Opening an inner door, he showed me into a room where there seemed to be a confused mass of faces. In reality there might have been three or four, but they multiplied themselves to my timid eyes.

“A little girl wants to see Mr. Gregg,” said the young man.

A tall gentleman came forward, with a pale face and gray whiskers. He said he was Mr. Gregg, and asked what my business was.

“I want to see you by yourself, if you please, sir.”

He led the way to another room, and I took the note out of my glove and gave it him. He read it over—to me it appeared a long one—looked at me, and then read it again.

“Are you Anne Hereford?”

“Yes,” I said, wondering how he knew my name. “My aunt, Mrs. Edwin Barley, bade me say she was too ill to write it better, but she hoped you would understand it.”

“Is she so ill as to be in danger?”

"I am afraid so."

He still looked at me, and twirled the note in his fingers. I could see that it was written with a pencil.

"Do you know the purport of this?" he inquired, pointing to the note.

"No, sir."

"Did you not read it coming along? It was not sealed."

"Oh, no. I did not take it out of my glove."

"Well—tell Mrs. Edwin Barley that I perfectly understand, and shall immediately obey her: tell her all will be ready by the time she sends to me. And—stay a bit. Have you any Christian name besides Anne?"

"My name is Anne Ursula."

"And what was your father's name? And what your mother's?"

"Papa's was Thomas, and mamma's Ursula," I answered, wondering very much.

He wrote down the name, asked a few more questions, and then showed me out at the street-door, giving a parting injunction that I was not

to forget the words of his message to Mrs. Edwin Barley, and not to mention abroad that I had been to his office.

Reaching home without hindrance, I was about to enter the sick-room, when Miss Delves softly called to me from the upper stairs: Mrs. Edwin Barley was sleeping, and must not be disturbed. So I went higher up to take my things off, and Charlotte Delves asked me into her chamber—a very nice one, immediately over Mrs. Edwin Barley’s.

“Tread softly, my dear. If she can only sleep, it will do her good.”

I would not tread at all, though the carpet was thick and soft, but sat down on the first chair. Miss Delves was changing her cap. She wore very nice ones always.

“Miss Delves, I wish you’d please to tell me. Do you think my aunt will get well?”

“It is to be hoped so,” was the answer. “But Mr. Edwin Barley is fretting himself to fiddle-strings over it.”

“Do *you* think she will?”

Miss Delves was combing out her long flaxen

curls ; bright thick curls they were ; very smooth, and of an exceedingly light shade. She twirled two round her finger before she answered.

“ Yes, I think she will. It is true that she is very ill—very ; but, on the other hand, she has youth in her favour.”

“ Is she dangerously ill ?”

“ No doubt. But how many people are there, lying in danger daily, who recover ! The worst of it is, she is so excited, so restless : the doctors don’t like that. It is not to be wondered at, with this trouble in the house : she could not have fallen ill at a more unfortunate time. I think she has a good constitution.”

“ Mamma used to say that all the Carews had that. They were in general long-lived.”

Charlotte Delves looked round at me. “ Your mamma was not long-lived. She died young—so to say.”

“ But mamma’s illness came on first from an accident. She was hurt in India. Oh, Miss Delves ! can’t anything be done to cure my Aunt Selina ?”

“ My dear, everything will be done that it is

possible to do. The doctors talk of the shock to the system; but, as I say, she is young. You must not be too anxious; it would answer no end. Had you a nice walk this morning?"

"Yes."

She finished her hair, and put on the pretty cap, its rich lace lappets falling behind the curls. Then she took up her watch and chain, and looked out at the window as she put them round her neck.

"Here's a policeman coming to the house! I wonder what he wants?"

"Has there been any news yet of George Heneage?"

"None," she answered. "Heneage Grange is being watched."

"Is that where he lives?"

"It is his father's place?"

"And is it near to here?"

"Oh, no. More than a hundred miles away. The police think it not improbable that he escaped there at once. The Grange has been searched for him, we hear, unsuccessfully. But the police are by no means sure that he

is not concealed there, and they have set a watch."

"Oh dear! I hope they will not find him!"

I said it with a shudder. The finding of George Heneage seemed to promise I knew not what renewal of horror. Charlotte Delves turned her eyes upon me in astonishment and reproof.

"You hope they will not find him! You cannot know what you are saying, Miss Hereford. I think I would give half the good that is left in my life to have him found—and hung. What right had he to take that poor young man's life? or to bring this shocking trouble into a gentleman's family?"

Very true. Of course he had none.

"Mr. Edwin Barley has taken a vow to track him out; and he will be sure to do it, sooner or later. We will go down, Miss Hereford."

The policeman had not come upon the business, at all, but about some poaching matter. Mr. Edwin Barley came out of his wife's room as we were creeping by it. Charlotte Delves asked if Mrs. Edwin was awake?

"Awake? Yes! and in a fine excitable state,"

he answered, irritably. "She does not sleep three minutes together. It is giving herself no chance of recovery. She has got it in her head now that she's going to die, and is sending for Martin."

He strode down to the waiting policeman. Charlotte Delves went into Mrs. Edwin Barley's room, and took me. Selina's cheeks were still hectic with fever; her blue eyes bright and wild.

"If you would but try to calm yourself, Mrs. Edwin Barley!"

"I am as calm as I can expect to be," was her answer, given with some petulance. "My husband need not talk; he's worse than I am. He says now the doctors are treating me wrongly, and that he shall call in a fresh one. I suppose I shall die between them."

"I wish I knew what would soothe you," spoke Charlotte Delves, in a kind, pleasant voice.

"I'm very thirsty; I've taken all the lemonade; you can fetch me up some more. Anne, do you stay here."

Charlotte Delves took down the lemonade waiter, and Selina drew me to her. "The

message, Anne !—the message ! Did you see Mr. Gregg ?”

I gave her the message as I had received it. It was well, she said, and turned away from me in her restlessness. Mr. Martin came in the afternoon : and from that time he seemed to be a great deal with Selina. A day or two passed on, bringing no change : she continued very ill, and George Heneage was not found.

I had another walk to Hallam on the Friday. Philip King’s funeral was to be on the Saturday, and the walk appeared to have some connection with that event. Selina sent no note this time, but a mysterious message.

“ See Mr. Gregg alone as before, Anne,” were the orders she gave me. “ Tell him that the funeral is fixed for eleven o’clock to-morrow morning, and he must be at hand, and watch his time. You can mention that I am now too ill to write.”

“ Tell him—what do you say, Selina ?”

“ Tell him exactly what I have told you ; he will understand, though you do not. Why do you make me speak ?” she added irritably. “ I

send you in preference to a servant on this private business."

I discharged the commission; and, with the exception of about one minute on my return, did not see Selina again that day. It was said in the household that she was a trifle better. Mr. Edwin Barley had been as good as his word, and a third doctor attended now, a solemn old gentleman in black dress clothes and gold spectacles. It transpired, no one but Miss Delves knowing with what truth, that he agreed with his two brethren in the treatment they had pursued.

Saturday morning. The house woke up to a quiet bustle. People were going and coming, servants were moving about and preparing, all in a subdued decorous manner. The servants had been put in mourning—Mr. Edwin Barley was all in black, and Charlotte Delves rustled from room to room in rich black silk. Philip King had been related to her in a very distant degree. Mrs. Edwin Barley was no worse; better, if anything, the doctors said. From what could be gathered by us, who were not doctors, the throat was a trifle better; she herself weaker.

The funeral was late. The clocks were striking eleven as it wound down the avenue on its way to the church, an old-fashioned little structure, situate at right angles between the house and Hallam. In the first black chariot sat the clergyman, Mr. Martin; then followed the hearse; then two mourning-coaches. In the first were Mr. Edwin Barley, his brother, and two gentlemen whom I did not know—they were the mourners; in the other were the six pall-bearers. Some men walked in hat-bands, and the carriages were drawn by four horses, bearing plumes.

“Is it out of sight, Anne?”

The questioner was my aunt, for it was at her window I stood, peeping beside the blind. It had been out of sight some minutes, I told her, and must have passed the lodge.

“Then you go down-stairs, Anne, and open the hall-door. Stand there until Mr. Gregg comes; he will have a clerk with him: bring them up here. Do all this quietly, child.”

In five minutes Mr. Gregg came, a young man accompanying him. I shut the hall-door and took them upstairs. They trod so softly!

just as though they would avoid being heard. Selina held out her hand to Mr. Gregg.

“How are you to-day, Mrs. Edwin Barley?”

“They say I am better,” she replied; “I hope I am. Is it quite ready?”

“Quite,” said he, taking a parchment from one of his pockets. “You will hear it read?”

“Yes; that I may see whether you understood my imperfect letter. I hope it is not long. The church, you know, is not so far off; they will be back soon.”

“It is quite short,” Mr. Gregg replied, having bent his ear to catch her speech, for she spoke low and imperfectly. “Where shall my clerk wait while I read it?”

She sent us into her dressing-room, the clerk and I, whence we could hear Mr. Gregg’s voice slowly reading something, but could not distinguish the words or sense; once I caught the name “Anne Ursula Hereford.” And then we were called in again.

“Anne, go down-stairs and find Jemima,” were the next orders. “Bring her up here.”

“Is it to give her her medicine?” asked Jemima, as she followed me up-stairs.

“I don’t know.”

“My girl,” began the attorney to Jemima, “can you be discreet, and hold your tongue.”

Jemima stared very much : first at seeing them there, next at the question. She gave no answer in her surprise, and Mrs. Edwin Barley made a sign that she should come close to her.

“Jemima, I am sure you know that I have been a good mistress to you, and I ask you to render me a slight service in return. In my present state of health, I have thought it necessary to make my will ; to devise away the trifle of property I possess of my own. I am about to sign it, and you and Mr. Gregg’s clerk will witness my signature. The service I require of you is, that you will not speak of this to any one. Can I rely upon you?”

“Yes, ma’am, certainly you may,” replied the servant, speaking in an earnest tone : and she evidently meant to keep her word honestly.

“And my clerk I have answered to you for,” put in Mr. Gregg, as he raised Mrs. Edwin

Barley and placed the open parchment before her.

She signed her name, "Selina Barley;" the clerk signed his, "William Dixon;" and Jemima hers, "Jemima Lea." Mr. Gregg remarked that Jemima's writing *might* be read, and it was as much as could be said of it. She quitted the room, and soon afterwards Mr. Gregg and his clerk took their departure in the same quiet manner that they had come.

I was closing the hall-door after them, when the sound of silk, rustling up, fell on my startled ears, and Charlotte Delves stepped into the hall from one of the passages. She had been shut up in her parlour.

"Who is it that has gone out?"

But I was already half way up to Selina's room, and would not hear. Miss Delves opened the door and looked after them. And at that moment Jemima appeared. Charlotte Delves laid hold of her, and no doubt turned her inside out.

"Anne, my dear, if I die you are now provided for. At least——"

“ Oh, Selina ! Selina ! You cannot be going to die ! ”

“ Perhaps not. I hope not. Yes, I do hope it, Anne, in spite of my fancied warning—which, I suppose, was only a dream, after all. My mind must have dwelt on what you said about Ursula. If you ever relate to me anything of the sort again, Anne, I’ll beat you.”

I stood conscience-stricken. But in telling her what I did, I had only obeyed my mother. I like to repeat this over and over.

“ At least, as well provided for as I have it in my power to provide,” she continued, just as though there had been no interruption. “ I have left you my four thousand pounds. It is out at good interest—five per cent. ; and I have directed it to accumulate until you are eighteen. Then it goes to you. This will just keep you ; just be enough to keep you from going out as a governess. If I live, you will have your home with me after leaving school. Of course, that governess scheme was all a farce ; Ursula could only have meant it as such. The world would stare to see a go-

verness in a grand-daughter of Carew of Keppe-Carew."

The will lay on the bed. She told me to lock it up in the opposite cabinet, taking the keys from underneath the pillow, and I obeyed her. By her directions, I took the cabinet key off the bunch, locked it up alone in a drawer, and she returned the bunch underneath her pillow. By that time she could not speak at all. Charlotte Delves, happening to come in, asked what she had been doing to reduce her strength like that.

It was a miserable day after they came in from the funeral. Mr. Edwin Barley did not seem to know what to do with himself, and the other people had gone home. Mr. Martin was alone with Selina for a great portion of the afternoon. At first I did not know he was there, and looked in. The clergyman was kneeling down by the bed, praying aloud. I shut the door again, hoping they had not heard it open. In the evening Selina appeared considerably better. She sat up in bed, and ate a few spoonfuls of arrow-root. Mr. Edwin Barley, who was in the arm-chair near the fire, said it was poor

stuff, and she ought to take either brandy or wine, or both.

“Let me give you some in that, Selina,” he cried. And indeed he had been wanting to give it her all along.

“I should be afraid to take it; don’t tease me,” she feebly answered, and it was astonishing how low her voice was getting. “You know what the doctors say, Edwin. When once the inflammation (or whatever it is) in the throat has passed, then I may be fed up every hour. Perhaps they will let me begin to-morrow.”

“If they don’t mind, they’ll keep you so low that—that we shall have to give you a bottle of brandy a day.” I think the concluding words, after the pause, had been quite changed from what he had been going to say, and he spoke half-jokingly. “I know that the proper treatment for you would have been stimulants. I told Lowe so again to-day, but he would not have it. But for one thing, I’d take the case into my own hands, and give you a wine-glass of brandy now.”

“And that one thing?” she asked, in her scarcely perceptible voice.

“The doubt that I *might* do wrong.”

Jemima appeared at the door with a candle : it was my signal. Selina kissed me twice, and said she should hope to get up on the morrow. I went round to Mr. Edwin Barley.

“Good night, sir.”

“Is it your bed-time, child ? Good night.”

CHAPTER VI.

DEAD !

EIGHT o'clock the next morning, and the church-bells ringing out on the sunshiny air! Everything looked joyous as I drew up the blind—kept down for a week previously. I dressed myself, without waiting for Jemima, in my Sunday frock with its deep crape trimmings. The house would be open again to-day; Selina be sitting up.

I scrambled over my dressing; I fear I scrambled over my prayers. Everything was so still below I thought they had forgotten me. Going down, I knocked at Selina's door, and was waiting to hear her answer, when one of the maids came running up the stairs in a flurry. It was Sarah.

“You cannot go in there, Miss Hereford.”

“I want to see how my aunt is.”

“ Oh, she—she—you must not go in, miss, I say. Your aunt cannot see you just now; you must please go down into Miss Delves’s parlour.”

Dropping the handle of the door in obedience, I went down a few steps. Sarah ascended to the upper flights. But the girl’s manner had alarmed me; and, without any thought of doing wrong, I turned back and softly opened the door. The curtains were drawn closely round the bed.

“ Are you worse, Selina ?”

No reply came, and I feared she was worse. Perhaps lying with leeches to her throat. I had seen leeches to a throat once, and had never forgotten the sight. At that moment the appearance of the room struck me as strange. *It seemed to have been put to rights.* I pulled open the curtain in full dread of the leeches.

Alas ! it was not leeches I saw ; but a still, white face. The face of my Aunt Selina, it is true, but—dead. I shrieked out, in my shock of terror, and flew into the arms of Sarah, who came running in.

“ What is the matter ?” exclaimed Charlotte

Delves, flying up to the landing where we stood.

“Why, Miss Hereford has been in there; and I told her not to go!” said Sarah, hushing my face to her as she spoke. “Why couldn’t you listen to me, miss?”

“I didn’t know Miss Hereford was up; she should have waited for Jemima,” said Charlotte Delves, as she laid hold of me, and led me down to her parlour.

“Oh, Miss Delves, Miss Delves, what is it?” I sobbed. “Is she really dead?”

“She is dead, all too certain, my dear. But I am very sorry you should have gone in. It is just like Jemima’s carelessness!”

“What’s that?—that’s like my carelessness, Miss Delves?” resentfully inquired Jemima, who had come forward on hearing the noise.

“Why, your suffering this child to dress herself alone, and go about the house at large. One would think you might have been attentive this morning, of all others.”

“I went up just before eight, and she was asleep,” answered Jemima, with as pert an accent

as she dared to use. "Who was to imagine she'd awake and be down so soon?"

"Why did she die? what killed her?" I asked, my sobs choking me. "Dead! *dead!* My Aunt Selina dead!"

"She was taken worse at eleven o'clock last night, and Mr. Lowe was sent for," explained Charlotte Delves. "He could do nothing, and she died at two."

"Where was Mr. Edwin Barley?"

"He was with her."

"Not when she was taken worse," interposed Jemima. "I was with her alone. It was my turn to sit up, and she had spoken quite cheerfully to me. Before settling myself in the arm-chair, I went to see if she had dropped asleep. My patience!—my heart went pit-a-pat at the change in her. I ran for Mr. Edwin Barley, and he came in. Mr. Lowe was sent for: everything was done, but she could not be saved."

I turned to Charlotte Delves in my sad distress. "She was so much better last night," I said, imploringly. "She was getting well."

"It was a deceitful improvement," replied

Charlotte Delves—and she seemed really sad and grieved. “Lowe said he could have told us so had he been here. Mr. Edwin Barley quite flew out at him, avowing his belief that it was the medical treatment that had killed her.”

“And was it?” I eagerly asked, as if, the point ascertained, it could bring her back to life. “Do they know what she died of?”

“As to knowing, I don’t think any of them know too much,” answered Charlotte Delves. “The doctors say the disorder, together with the shock her system had received, could not be subdued. Mr. Edwin Barley says it could have been, under a different treatment. Lowe tells me now he had little hope from the first.”

“And couldn’t open his lips to say so!” interposed Jemima. “It’s just like those doctors. The master is dreadfully cut up.”

They tried to make me take some breakfast, but I could neither eat nor drink. Jemima said they had had theirs “ages ago.” None of the household had been to bed since the alarm.

“All I know is, that if blame lies anywhere it is with the doctors,” observed Charlotte Delves,

as she pressed me to eat. "Every direction they gave was minutely followed."

"Why did nobody fetch me down to see her?"

"Child, she never asked for you; she was past thinking of things. And to you it would only have been a painful sight."

"That's true," added Jemima. "When I looked at her, all unconcerned, I saw death in her face. It frightened me, I can tell you. I ran to call the master, thinking——"

"Thinking what?" spoke Charlotte Delves, for Jemima had made a sudden pause.

"Nothing particular, Miss Delves. Only that something which had happened in the day was odd," added Jemima, glancing significantly at me. "The master was in his room half undressed, and he came rushing after me, just as he was. The minute he looked on her he murmured that she was dying, and sent off a man for Mr. Lowe, and another for the old doctor from Nettleby. Lowe came at once, but the other did not get here till it was over. She died at two."

Jemima would have enlarged on the details for

ever. I felt sick as I listened. Even now, as I write, a sort of sickness comes over me with the remembrance. I wandered into the hall, and was sobbing with my head against the dining-room door-post, not knowing any one was there, when Mr. Edwin Barley gently unlatched the door and looked out.

He had been weeping, as was easy to be seen. His eyes were red—his air and manner subdued; but my acquired fear of him was in full force, and I would rather have gone away than been drawn in.

“Child, don’t cry so.”

“I never took leave of her, sir. I did not see her before she died.”

“If weeping tears of blood would bring her back to life, she’d be here again,” he responded, almost fiercely. “They have killed her between them; they have, Anne; and, by heavens! if there was any law to touch them, they should feel it.”

“Who, sir?”

“The doctors. And precious doctors they have proved themselves! Why do you tremble

so, child? They have not understood the disorder from the first: it is one requiring the utmost possible help from stimulants; otherwise the system cannot battle with it. They gave her none; they kept her upon water, and—she is lying there. Oh! that I had done as it perpetually crossed my mind to do!” he continued, clasping his hands together in anguish; “that I had taken her treatment upon myself, risking the responsibility! She would have been living now!”

If ever a man spoke the genuine sentiments of his heart, Mr. Edwin Barley appeared to do so then, and a little bit of my dislike of him subsided—just a shade of it.

“I am sorry you should have come into the house at this time, my poor child; some spell seems to have been upon it ever since. Go now to Charlotte Delves; tell her I say she is to take good care of you.”

He shut himself in again as I went away. Oh, the restless day! the miserable day! That, and the one of mamma’s death remain still upon my memory as the two sad epochs of

my life, standing out conspicuously in their bitterness.

Moving about the house restlessly ; shedding tears by turns ; leaning my head on the sofa in Miss Delves's parlour ! She was very kind to me ; but what was any kindness to me then ? It seemed to me that I could never, never be happy again. I had so loved Selina !

I wanted to see her again. It was almost as if I had *not* seen her in the morning, for the shock of surprise had startled away my senses. I had looked upon mamma so many times after death, that the customary dread of childhood at such sights lingered but little with me. And I began to watch for an opportunity to go in.

It came at twilight. In passing the room I saw the door open, and supposed some of the maids might be there. In I went bravely ; and passed round to the far side of the bed, nearest to the window and the fading light.

But I had not courage to draw aside the curtain quite at first, and sat down for a moment in the low chair by the bed's head, to wait until

courage came. Some one else came first; and that was Mr. Edwin Barley.

He walked slowly in, carrying a candle, startling me nearly to sickness. His slippers were light, and I had not heard his approach. It must have been he who had left the door open, probably having been to fetch the very candle in his hand. He did not come near the bed, at least on the side where I was, but seemed to be searching for something; looking about, opening two or three drawers. I sat cowering, feeling I had no business to be there; my heart was in my mouth, when he went to the door and called Charlotte Delves.

“Where are my wife’s keys?” he inquired, as she came up.

“I do not know,” was her answer; and she began to look about the room as he had previously done. “They must be somewhere.”

“Not know! But it was your place to take possession of them, Charlotte. I want to examine her desk; there may be directions left in it, for all I can tell.”

“I really forgot all about the keys,” Charlotte

Delves deprecatingly said. "I will ask the women who were here. Why! here they are; in this china basket on the mantelpiece," she suddenly exclaimed. "I knew they could not be far off."

Mr. Edwin Barley took the keys, and went out, the desk under his arm. Charlotte followed him, and closed the door. But I was too much scared to attempt to remain; I softly opened it, and stole out after them, waiting against the wall in the shade. They had halted at the turning to Mr. Barley's study, half way down the stairs, and were talking in subdued tones. Charlotte Delves was telling him of the lawyer's visit on the previous day.

"I did not mention it before," she observed: "of course, while poor Mrs. Edwin was here, it was not my business to report to you on anything she might do, and to-day has had too much trouble in it. But there's no doubt that Gregg was here, and a clerk with him. Little Miss Hereford showed them out, and I suppose admitted them. It was an odd time to choose for the visit—the hour of the funeral."

Can you imagine how terrified I felt as

Charlotte Delves related this ? I had done no wrong ; I had simply obeyed the orders of Mrs. Edwin Barley ; but it was uncertain what amount of blame her husband might lay to my share, and how he would punish it.

“ It is strange what Gregg could be doing here at that time with a clerk ; and in private, as you appear to assume,” said Mr. Edwin Barley. “ Could he have come by appointment, to transact any legal business for my wife ? ”

“ But, if so, why should she wish it kept from you ? ” and Charlotte Delves’s voice had a jealous ring in it : jealous for the rights of her cousin, Edwin Barley.

“ I don’t know. The little girl may be able to explain. Call her up.”

Another fright for me. But the next moment his voice countermanded the order.

“ Never mind, Charlotte ; let it be. When I want information of Anne Hereford, I’ll question her myself. And if my wife did anything, made a will, or gave Gregg any other directions, we shall soon know of it.”

“ Made a will ! ” exclaimed Charlotte Delves.

“ I should not think it likely that she would without speaking to me, but she could do it ; she was of age,” replied Mr. Barley.

He went into his study with the desk, and Charlotte Delves passed down stairs. I got into her parlour as soon as she did ; never having seen my dear Aunt Selina.

They took me to see her the next day, when she was in her first coffin. She looked very calm and peaceful ; but I think the dead, generally speaking, do look peaceful ; whether they have died a happy death or not. A few autumn flowers were strewed upon her flannel shroud.

In coming out of the room, my face streaming with tears, there stood Mr. Lowe.

“ Oh, sir !” I cried, in my burst of grief, “ what made her die ? Could you not have saved her ?”

“ My little girl, what she really died of was exhaustion,” he answered. “ The disease took hold of her, and she could not rally from it. As to saving her—God alone could have done that.”

There was no inquest this time. The doctors certified to some cause of death. The house was

more closely shut up than before ; the servants went about speaking in whispers ; deeper mourning was prepared for them. In Selina's desk a paper had been found by Mr. Edwin Barley—a few pencilled directions on it, should she “unhappily die.” Therefore the prevision of death had been really upon her. She named two or three persons whom she should wish to attend her funeral, Mr. Gregg being one of them.

Saturday again, and another funeral ! Ever since, even to this hour, Saturdays and funerals have been connected together in my impressionable mind. I had a pleasant dream early that morning. I saw Selina in bright white robes, looking peacefully happy, saying that her sins had been washed away by Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. I had previously sobbed myself to sleep, hoping that they had.

It was fixed for twelve o'clock this time. The long procession, longer than the other one had been, wound down the avenue. Mr. Edwin Barley went in a coach by himself ; perhaps he did not like to be seen grieving ; three or four coaches followed it, and some private carriages,

Mr. Barley's taking the lead. There was not a dry eye amidst the household—us, who were left at home—with the exception of Charlotte Delves. I did not see her weep at all, then or previously. The narrow crape tucks on her gown were exchanged for wide ones, and some black love-ribbon mingled with her hair. I sobbed till they came back, sitting by myself in the dining-room.

It was the very room they filed into, those who entered. A formidable array, in their sweeping scarves and hat-bands; too formidable for me to pass, and I shrunk into the far corner, between the sideboard and the dumb-waiter. But they began to leave again, only just saying good day in a low tone to Mr. Edwin Barley, and got into the coaches that waited. Mr. Gregg the lawyer remained, and Mr. Barley.

“Pardon me that I stay,” observed the lawyer to Mr. Edwin Barley; “I am but obeying the request of your late wife. She charged me, in the event of her death, to stay and read the will after the funeral.”

“The will!” echoed Mr. Edwin Barley.

“She made a will just before she died. She gave me instructions for it privately ; though what her motives were for keeping it a secret, she did not state. It was executed on the day previous to her death.”

“This is news to me,” observed Mr. Edwin Barley. “Do you hold the will?”

“No, I left it with her. You had better remain, my little girl,” the lawyer added to me, touching my arm with his black glove as I was essaying to quit the room. “The will concerns you. I asked your wife, sir, if I should take possession of it, but she preferred to keep it herself.”

“I do not know where it can have been put, then,” returned Mr. Edwin Barley, while his brother lifted his head in interest. “I have examined her desk and one or two of her drawers where she kept papers ; but I have found no will.”

“Perhaps you did not look particularly for a will, not knowing she had made one, and so it may have escaped your notice, sir,” suggested the lawyer.

“Pardon me ; it was the precise thing I looked for. I heard of your visit to my wife ; not, however, until after her death ; and it struck me that your coming might have reference to something of the sort. But I found no will ; only a few pencilled words on a half-sheet of paper in her desk. Do you know where it was put ?”

The lawyer turned to me. “Perhaps this little lady may know,” he said. “She made one in the room when I was with Mrs. Edwin Barley, and may have seen afterwards where the will was placed.”

Again I felt sick with apprehension : few children at my age have ever been so shy and sensitive. It seemed to me that all was coming out ; at any rate, my share in it. But I spoke pretty bravely.

“You mean the paper that you left on my Aunt Selina’s bed, sir ? I put it in the cabinet ; she directed me to do so.”

“In the cabinet ?” repeated Mr. Edwin Barley to me.

“Yes, sir. Just inside as you open it.”

“Will you go with me to search for it?” said Mr. Edwin Barley to the lawyer. “And you can go into Miss Delves’s parlour, Anne ; little girls are better out of these affairs.”

“Pardon me,” dissented Mr. Gregg. “Miss Hereford, as the only interested party, had better remain. And if she can show us where the will is, it will save time.”

Mr. Edwin Barley looked as if he meant to object, but did not. “The child’s nerves have been unhinged,” he said to the lawyer as they went upstairs, I and Mr. Barley following.

The key of the cabinet lay in the corner of the drawer where I had placed it. Mr. Edwin Barley took it from me and opened the cabinet. But no will was to be seen.

“I did not think of looking here,” he observed ; “my wife never used the cabinet to my knowledge. There is no will here.”

There was no will anywhere, apparently. Drawers were opened ; her desk, standing now on the drawers, was searched ; all without effect.

“It is very extraordinary,” said Mr. Gregg to him.

“ I can only come to one conclusion—that my wife must have destroyed it herself. It is true the keys were lying about for several hours subsequent to her death, at anybody’s command ; but who would steal a will ? ”

“ I do not suppose Mrs. Edwin Barley would destroy it,” dissented Mr. Gregg. “ Nothing can be more improbable. She expressed her happiness at having been able to make a will ; her great satisfaction. Who left the keys about, sir ? ”

“ The blame of that lies with Charlotte Delves. It escaped her memory to secure them, she tells me : and in the confusion of the sudden blow, it is not to be wondered at. But, and if the keys were left about ? I have honest people in my house, Mr. Gregg.”

“ Who benefited by the will ? ” asked Mr. Barley of the Oaks, he having helped in the search, and was now looking on with a face of puzzled concern. “ Who comes into the money, Gregg ? ”

“ Ay, who ? ” put in Mr. Edwin Barley.

“ This little girl, Anne Ursula Hereford. Mrs. Edwin Barley bequeathed to her the whole of

her money, and also her trinkets, except the trinkets that had been your own gift to her, Mr. Edwin Barley.” And he proceeded to detail the provisions of the short will. “In fact, she left to Miss Hereford everything of value she had to leave; money, clothes, trinkets. It is most strange where the will can be.”

“It is more than strange,” observed Mr. Edwin Barley. “Why did she wish to make the will in secret?”

“I have told you, sir, that she did not say why.”

“But can you not form an idea why.”

“It occurred to me that she thought you might not like her leaving all she had away from you, and might have feared you would interfere.”

“No,” he quietly said, “I should not have done that. Every wish that she confided to me should have been scrupulously carried out.”

“Oh, but come, you know! a big sheet of parchment, sealed and inscribed, can’t vanish in this way,” exclaimed Mr. Barley. “It must be somewhere in the room.”

It might be, but nobody could find it. Mr.

Barley got quite excited and angry : Mr. Edwin was calm throughout. Mr. Barley went to the door, calling out for Miss Delves.

“Charlotte, come up here. Do you hear, Charlotte?”

She ran up quickly, evidently wondering.

“Look here,” cried Mr. Barley, “Mrs. Edwin’s will can’t be found. It was left in this cabinet, my brother is told.”

“Oh, then, Mrs. Edwin did make a will?” was the response of Charlotte Delves.

“Yes ; but it is gone,” repeated Mr. Barley of the Oaks.

“It cannot be gone,” said Charlotte. “If the will was left in the cabinet, there it would be now.”

The old story was gone over again ; nothing more. The will had been made, and as certainly placed there. The servants were honest, not capable of meddling with that or anything else. But there was no sign or symptom of a will left.

“It is very strange,” exclaimed Mr. Edwin Barley, looking furtively from the corner of his black eyes at most of us in succession, as if we

were in league against him or against the will. "I will have the house searched throughout."

The search took place that same evening. Himself, his brother, Mr. Gregg, and Charlotte Delves taking part in it. Entirely without success.

And in my busy heart there was running a conviction all the while, that Mr. Edwin Barley had himself made away with the will.

"Will you not act in accordance with its provisions, sir?" Mr. Gregg asked him as he was leaving.

"I do not think I shall," said Mr. Edwin Barley. "Produce the will, and every behest in it shall be fulfilled. Failing a will, my wife's property becomes mine, and I shall act as I please by it."

The days went by; ten unhappy days. I spent most of my time with Miss Delves, seeing scarcely anything of Mr. Edwin Barley. Part of the time he was staying at his brother's, but now and then I met him in the passages or the hall. He would give me a nod, and pass by. I cannot describe my state of feeling, or how

miserable the house appeared to me : I was as one unsettled in it, as one who lived in constant discomfort, fear, and dread ; though, of what, I could not define. Jemima remarked one day that “ Miss Hereford went about moithered, like a fish out of water.”

The will did not turn up, and probably never would ; neither was any clue given to the mystery of its disappearance. Meanwhile rumours of its loss grew rife in the household and in the neighbourhood : whether the lawyer talked, or Mr. Barley of the Oaks, and thus set them afloat, was uncertain, but it was thought to have been one or the other. I know I had said nothing ; Charlotte Delves said she had not ; neither, beyond doubt, had Mr. Edwin Barley. When an acquaintance once asked him whether the report was true, he answered Yes, it was true so far as that Mr. Gregg said his late wife had made a will, and it could not be found ; but his own belief was that she must have destroyed it again ; he could not suspect any of the household would tamper with its mistress’s private affairs.

One day Mr. Edwin Barley called me to him.

I was standing by the large Michaelmas daisy shrub, and he passed along the path.

“Are you quite sure,” he asked in his sternest tone, but perhaps it was only a serious one, “that you did not reopen the cabinet yourself, and do something with the parchment?”

“I never opened it again, sir. If I had, my aunt must have seen me. And I could not have done so,” I added, recollecting myself, “for she kept the bunch of keys under her pillow.”

“She was the only one, though, who knew where it was placed,” muttered Mr. Edwin Barley to himself in allusion to me, as he walked on.

“It’s a queer start about that will!” Jemima resentfully remarked that same night when she was undressing me. “And I don’t half like it; I can tell you that, Miss Hereford. They may turn round on me next, and say I made away with it.”

“That’s not likely, Jemima. The will would not do you any good. Do you think it will ever be found?”

“It’s to be hoped it will—with all this un-

pleasantness ! I wish I had never come within hearing of it for my part. The day old Gregg and the young man were here, Charlotte Delves got hold of me, pumping me on this side, pumping me on that. Had they been up to Mrs. Edwin Barley ? she asked : and what had their business been with her ? She didn't get much out of me, but it made me as cross as two sticks. It is droll where the will can have gone ! One can't suspect Mr. Edwin Barley of touching it ; and I don't ; but the loss makes him all the richer. That's the way of the world," concluded Jemima : " the more money one has, the more one gets added to it. It is said that he comes into possession of forty thousand pounds by the death of Philip King."

The ten days' sojourn in the desolate house ended, and then Charlotte Delves told me I was going to leave it. In consequence of the death of Selina, the trustees had assigned to Mrs. Hemson the task of choosing a school for me. Mrs. Hemson had fixed on one near to the town where she resided, Dashleigh ; and I was to pass a week at Mrs. Hemson's house before entering it.

On the evening previous to my departure, a message came from Mr. Edwin Barley that I was to go to him in the dining-room. Charlotte Delves smoothed my hair with her fingers, and sent me in. He was at dessert : fruit and wine were on the table ; and John set a chair for me. Mr. Edwin Barley put some walnuts that he cracked and a bunch of grapes on my plate.

“ Will you take some wine, little girl ? ”

“ No, thank you, sir. I have just had tea.”

Presently he put a small box into my hands. I remembered having seen it on Selina’s dressing-table.

“ It contains a few of your Aunt Selina’s trinkets,” he said. “ All she brought here, except a necklace, which is of value, and will be forwarded, with some of her more costly clothes, to Mrs. Hemson for you. Do you think you can take care of these until you are of an age to wear them ? ”

“ I will take great care of them, sir. I will lock them up in the little desk mamma gave me, and I wear the key of it round my neck.”

“ Mind you do take care of them,” he rejoined,

with suppressed emotion. "If I thought you would not, I would never give them to you. You must treasure them always. And these things, recollect, are of value," he added, touching the box; "they are not child's toys. Take them upstairs, and put them in your trunk."

"If you please, sir, has the will been found?"
I waited to ask.

"It has not. Why?"

"Because, sir, you asked me if I had taken it; you said I was the only one who knew where it had been put. Indeed, I would not have touched it for anything."

"Be easy, little girl. I believe my wife herself destroyed the will: but I live in hopes of coming to the bottom of the mystery yet. As you have introduced the subject, you shall hear a word upon it from me. Busybodies have given me hints that I ought to carry out its substance in spite of the loss. I do not think so. The will, and what I hear connected with its making, has angered me, look you, Anne Hereford. Had my wife only breathed half a word to me that she wished you to have her money, every shilling

should be yours. But I don't like the under-hand work that went on in regard to it, and shall hold it precisely as though it had never existed. If I ever relent in your favour, it will not be yet awhile."

"I did not know she was going to leave me anything, indeed, sir."

"Just so. But it was you who undertook the communications to Gregg, it seems, and admitted him when he came. You all acted as though I were a common enemy ; and it has vexed me in no measured degree. That's all, child. Take another bunch of grapes with you."

I went away, carrying the casket and the grapes. Jemima was packing my trunks when I went up stairs, and she shared the grapes and the delight of looking at the contents of the casket : Selina's thin gold chain, and her beautiful little French watch, two or three bracelets, some rings, brooches, and a smelling-bottle, encased in filagree gold. All these treasures were mine. At first I gazed at them with a mixed feeling, in which awe and sorrow held their share ; Jemima the same : it seemed a pro-

fanation to rejoice over what had been so recently *hers*: but the sorrow soon lost itself in the moment's seduction. Jemima hung the chain and watch round her own neck, put on all the bracelets, thrust the largest of the rings on her little finger, and figured off before the glass; while I knelt on a chair looking on in mute admiration, anticipating the time when they would be adorning me. Ah, my readers! when we indeed become of an age to wear ornaments, how poor is the pleasure they afford then, compared to that other early anticipation!

A stern voice shouting out "Anne Hereford!" broke the charm, startling us excessively. Jemima tore off the ornaments, I jumped from the chair.

"Anne, I want you," came the reiterated call.

It was from Mr. Edwin Barley. He stood at the foot of the stairs as I ran down, my heart beating, expecting nothing but that the precious treasures were going to be wrested from me. Taking my hand, he led me into the dining-room, sat down, and held me before him.

"Anne, you are a sensible little girl," he began,

“and will understand what I say to you. The events, the tragedies which have happened in this house since you came to it, are not pleasant, they do not bring honour, either to the living or the dead. Were everything that occurred to be rigidly investigated, a large share of blame might be cast on my wife, your Aunt Selina. It is a reflection I would have striven to shield her from had she lived. I would doubly shield her now that she is dead. Will you do the same?”

“Yes, sir; I should like to do so.”

“That is right. Henceforth, when strangers question you, you must know nothing. The better plan will be to be wholly silent. Remember, child, I urge this for Selina’s sake. We know how innocent of deliberate wrong she was, but she was careless, and people might put a different construction on things. They might be capable of saying that she urged Heneage to revenge. You were present at that scene by the summer-house, from which Heneage ran off, and shot King. Do not ever speak of it.”

I think my breath went away from me in my

consternation. How had Mr. Edwin Barley learnt that? It could only have been from Selina.

“She sent me after Mr. Heneage, sir, to tell him to let Philip King alone—to command it in his mother’s name.”

“I know. Instead of that he went and shot him. I would keep my wife’s name out of all this; you must do the same. But that you are a child of right feeling and of understanding beyond your years, I should not say this to you. Good-bye. I shall not see you in the morning.”

“Good-bye, sir,” I answered. “Thank you for letting them all be kind to me.”

And he shook hands with me for the first time.

CHAPTER VII.

AT MISS FENTON'S.

I MUST have been a very impressionable child ; easily swayed by the opinions of those about me. The idea conveyed to my mind by what I had heard of Mrs. Hemson was, that she was something of an ogre with claws ; and I can truthfully say, I would almost as soon have been consigned to the care of an ogre as to hers. I felt so all the while I was going to her.

Charlotte Delves placed me in the ladies' carriage at Nettleby station under charge of the guard—just as it had been in coming. And once more I, poor lonely little girl, was being whirled on a railroad journey. But ah ! with what a sad amount of experience added to my young life !

Two o'clock was striking as the train steamed into Dashleigh station. I was not sure at first

that it was Dashleigh, and in the uncertainty did not get out. Several people were on the platform, waiting for the passengers the train might bring. One lady in particular attracted my notice, a tall, fair, graceful woman, with a sweet countenance. There was something in her face that put me in mind of mamma. She was looking attentively at the carriages, one after another, when her eyes caught mine, and she came to the door.

“I think you must be Anne,” she said, with a bright smile, and sweet voice of kindness. “Did you not know I should be here? I am Mrs. Hemson.”

That Mrs. Hemson! that the ogre with claws my imagination had painted! In my astonishment I never spoke or stirred. The guard came up.

“This is Dashleigh,” said he to me. “Are you come to receive this young lady, ma’am?”

Mrs. Hemson did receive me, with a warm embrace. She saw to my luggage, and then put me in a fly to proceed to her house. A thorough gentlewoman was she in all ways; a *lady* in ap-

pearance, mind, and manners. But it seemed to me a great puzzle how she could be so ; or, being so, that she could have married a retail tradesman.

Mr. Hemson was a silk-mercier and linen-draper. It appeared to me a large, handsome shop, containing many shopmen and customers. The fly passed it and stopped at the private door. We went through a wide passage and up a handsome staircase, into large and well-furnished sitting-rooms. My impression had been that Mrs. Hemson lived in a hovel, or, at the best, in some little dark sitting-room behind a shop. Mrs. Jones, who kept the little shop where mamma used to buy her things, had only a kitchen behind. Upstairs again were the nursery and bedrooms, a very large house altogether. There were six children, two girls who went to school by day, two boys out at boarding-school, and two little ones in the nursery. In the yard behind were other rooms, occupied by the young men engaged in the business, with whom Mrs. Hemson appeared to have nothing whatever to do.

"This is where you will sleep, Anne," she said, opening the door of a chamber which had two beds in it. "Frances and Mary sleep here, but they can occupy the same bed while you stay. Make haste and get your things off, my dear, for the dinner is ready."

I soon went down. There was no one in the drawing-room then, and I was looking at some of the books on the centre table, when a gentleman entered: he was tall, bright, handsome; a far more gentlemanly man than any I had seen at Mr. Edwin Barley's, more so than even George Heneage. I wondered who he could be.

"My dear little girl, I am glad you have arrived in safety," he said, cordially taking my hand. "It was a long way for them to send you alone."

It was Mr. Hemson. How could they have prejudiced me against him? was the first thought that struck me. I had yet to learn that people in our Keppe-Carew-class of life estimate tradespeople not by themselves but by their callings. The appearance of Mrs. Hemson had surprised

me ; how much more, then, did that of her husband ! Mrs. Jones's husband was a little mean man, who carried out the parcels, and was given, people said, to cheat. Since Selina mentioned Mr. Hemson's trade to me, I had associated the two in my mind. Well educated, good and kind, respected in his native town, and making money fast by fair dealing, Mr. Hemson, to my ignorance, was a world's wonder.

“ Is she not like Ursula, Frederick ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Hemson, holding up my chin. “ You remember her ? ”

He looked at me with a smile. “ I scarcely remember her. I don't think Ursula ever had eyes like these. They are worth a king's ransom ; and they are honest and true. ”

We went into the other room to dinner—a plain dinner of roast veal and ham, and a damson tart, all nicely cooked and served, with a well-dressed maid-servant to wait upon us. Altogether the house seemed thoroughly well conducted ; a pleasant, plentiful home, and where they certainly lived as quiet gentlepeople, not for show, but for comfort. Mr. Hemson went down-

stairs after dinner, and we returned to the drawing-room.

"Anne," Mrs. Hemson said, smiling at me, "you have appeared all amaze since you came into the house. What is the reason?"

I coloured very much; but she pressed the question.

"It is—a better house than I expected, ma'am."

"What! did they prejudice you against me?" she laughed. "Did your mamma do that?"

"Mamma told me nothing. It was my Aunt Selina. She said you had raised a barrier between—between——"

"Between myself and the Carews," she interrupted, filling up the pause. "They say I lost caste in marrying Mr. Hemson. And so I did. But—do you like him, Anne?"

"Very, very much. He seems quite a gentleman."

"He is a gentleman in all respects save one; but that is one which people cannot get over, rendering it impossible for them to meet him as an equal. Anne, when I became acquainted

with Mr. Hemson, I did not know he was in trade. Not that he intentionally deceived me, you must understand; he is a man of nice honour, incapable of deceit; but it fell out so. We were in a strange place, both far away from home, and what our relative position might be at home never happened to be alluded to by either of us. By the time I heard who and what he was, a silk-mercier and linendraper, I had learnt to value him above all else in the world. After that, he asked me to be his wife."

"And you agreed?"

"My dear, I first of all sat down and counted the cost. Before giving my answer, I calculated which I could best give up, my position in society as a gentlewoman and a gentleman's daughter of long pedigree, or Frederick Hemson. I knew that constant slights—not intentional ones, but what I should feel as such—would be my portion if I married him; that I should descend for ever in the scale of society—must leap the great gulf which separates the gentlewoman from the tradesman's wife. But I believed that I should find my compensation in

him : and I tried it. I have never repented the step ; I find more certainly, year by year, that if I threw away the shadow, I grasped the substance.”

“ Oh, but surely you are still a gentlewoman !”

“ My dear, such is not my position : I have put myself beyond the pale of what the world calls society. But I counted all that beforehand, I tell you, and I put it from me bravely. I weighed the cost well ; it has not been more than I bargained for.”

“ But indeed you are a gentlewoman,” I said earnestly, the tears rising to my eyes at what I thought injustice ; “ I can see you are.”

“ Granted, Anne. But what if others do not accord me the place ? I cannot visit gentlepeople or be visited by them. I am the wife of Mr. Hemson, a retail trader. This is a cathedral town, too ; and, in such, the distinctions of society are bowed to in an ultra degree.”

“ But is it right ?”

“ Quite right ; perfectly right : as you will find when you are older. If you have been gathering from my words that I rebel at existing things,

you are in error. The world would not get along without its social distinctive marks, though France once had a try at it."

"Yes, I know."

"I repeat, that I sat down and counted *the cost* ; and I grow more willing to pay it year by year. But, Anne, dear," and she laid her hand impressively on my arm, "I would not recommend my plan of action to others. It has answered in my case, for Mr. Hemson is a man in a thousand ; and I have dug a grave and buried my pride ; but in nine cases out of ten it would bring unhappiness, repentance, bickering. Nothing can be more productive of misery generally, than an unequal marriage."

I did not quite understand. She had said that she was paying off the cost year by year.

"Yes, Anne. One part of the cost must always remain—a weighty incubus. It is not only that I have put myself beyond the pale of my own sphere, but I have entailed it on my children. My girls must grow up in the state to which they are born : let them be ever so refined, ever so well educated, a barrier lies

across their path : in visiting, they must be confined to their father's class ; they can never expect to be sought in marriage by gentlemen. Wealthy tradespeople, professional men, they may stand a chance of ; but gentlemen, in the strict sense of the term, never."

"Will they feel it?"

"No, oh no. That part of the cost is alone mine. I have taken care not to bring them up to views above their father's station. There are moments when I wish I had never had children. We cannot put away our prejudices entirely, we Keppe-Carews, you see, Anne," she added, with a light laugh.

"I don't think anybody can," I said, with a wise shake of the head.

"And now, Anne—to change the subject—what were the details of that dreadful tragedy at Mr. Edwin Barley's?"

"I cannot tell them," I answered, with a rushing colour, remembering Mr. Edwin Barley's caution as to secrecy. Mrs. Hemson misunderstood the refusal.

"Poor child ! I suppose they kept particulars

from you: and it was right to do so. Could they not save Selina?"

"No—for she died. Mr. Edwin Barley says he knows she was treated wrongly."

"Ill-fated Selina! Were you with her when she died, Anne?"

"I was with her the night before. We thought she was getting better, and she thought it. She had forgotten all about the warning, saying it must be a dream."

"About the what?" interrupted Mrs. Hemson.

"While Selina was ill, she saw mamma. She said the Keppe-Carews always had these warnings."

"Child, be silent!" imperatively spoke Mrs. Hemson. "How could they think of imbuing you with their superstitions. It is all fancy."

"Mamma had the same warning, Mrs. Hemson. She said papa called her."

"Be quiet, I say, child!" she repeated, in a tone of emotion. "These subjects are totally unfit for you. Mind, Anne, that you do not allude to them before my little girls; and forget them yourself."

"They do not frighten me. But I should not speak of them to any one but you, Mrs. Hemson."

"Frances and Mary will be home from school at five, and be delighted to make acquaintance with you. You are going to school yourself next week. Have you heard that?"

"To a school in Dashleigh?"

"In the suburbs. The trustees have at length decided it, and I shall be at hand, in case of your illness, or anything of that sort. Had your Aunt Selina lived, you would have been placed at Nettleby."

"Where am I to spend the holidays?"

"At school. It is to Miss Fenton's that you are going."

"Is that where Frances and Mary go?"

"No," she answered, a smile crossing her lips. "They would not be admitted to Miss Fenton's."

"But why?"

"Because she professes to take none but gentlemen's daughters. My daughters, especially, with their father living in the same town, would not do at any price. It will be a condescension,"

she laughed, "that Miss Fenton allows you to dine with us once in a while."

"Perhaps she will not take me," I breathlessly said.

"My dear, she will be only too glad to do so. You are the daughter of Colonel Hereford, the granddaughter of Carew of Keppe-Carew."

And in spite of the lost caste of Mrs. Hemson, in spite of the shop below, I never spent a happier week than the one I spent with her.

And now came school life ; school life that was to continue without intermission, and did continue, until I was eighteen years of age. Part of these coming years were spent at Miss Fenton's ; the rest (as I found afterwards) at a school in France. It is very much the custom to cry down French scholastic establishments, to contrast them unfavourably with English ones. They may deserve the censure ; I do not know ; but I can truthfully say that so far as my experience goes, the balance is on the other side.

Miss Fenton's was a "Select Establishment," styling itself a first-class one. I have often wondered whether those less select, less expensive,

were not more liberal in their arrangements. Fourteen was the number of girls professed to be taken, but never once, during my stay, was the school quite full. It had a name ; and there lay the secret of its success. The teaching was good ; the girls were brought on well : but for the comforts ! You shall hear of them. And I declare that I transcribe each account faithfully.

There were nine pupils at the time I entered : I made the tenth. Miss Fenton, an English teacher, a French teacher who taught German also, and several day-masters, instructed us. Miss Fenton herself took nothing, that I saw, but the music ; she was about five-and-thirty, tall, thin, and very prim.

“ You will be well off there, my dear, in regard to living,” Mrs. Hemson had said to me. “ Miss Fenton tells me her pupils are treated most liberally ; and that she keeps an excellent table. Indeed she ought to do so, considering her terms.”

Of course I thought I *should* be treated liberally, and enjoy the benefits of the excellent table.

We got there just before tea time, six o'clock. Mrs. Hemson, acting for my trustees, had made the negotiations with Miss Fenton; of course she took me to school, stayed a few minutes with Miss Fenton, and then left me. When my things were off, and I was back in the drawing-room, Miss Fenton rang the bell.

"You shall join the young ladies at once," she said to me; "they are about to take tea. You have never been to school before, I think."

"No, ma'am. Mamma instructed me."

"Have the young ladies gone into the refectory?" Miss Fenton inquired, when a maid-servant appeared.

"I suppose so, ma'am," was the answer. "The bell has been rung for them."

"Desire Miss Linthorn to step hither."

Miss Linthorn appeared, a scholar of fifteen or sixteen, very upright. She made a deep curtsy as she entered.

"Take this young lady and introduce her," said Miss Fenton. "Her name is Hereford."

We went through some spacious, well-carpeted passages; their corners displaying a chaste statue,

or a large plant in beautiful bloom ; and thence into some shabby passages, uncarpeted. Nothing could be more magnificent (in a moderate, middle-class point of view) than the show part, the *company* part of Miss Fenton's house ; nothing much more meagre than the rest.

A long, bare deal table, with the tea tray at the top ; two plates of thick bread and butter, *very* thick, and one plate of thinner ; the English teacher pouring out the tea, the French one seated by her side, and eight girls lower down, that was what I saw on entering a room that looked cold and comfortless.

Miss Linthorn, leaving me just inside the door, walked up to the teachers and spoke.

“ Miss Hereford.”

“ I heard there was a new girl coming in to-day,” interrupted a young lady, lifting her head, and speaking in a rude, free tone. “ What's the name, Linthorn ?”

“ Will you have the goodness to behave as a lady—if you can, Miss Glynn ?” interrupted the English teacher, whose name was Dale. “ That will be your place, Miss Hereford,” she added,

to me, indicating the end of the form on the left side, below the rest. "Have you taken tea?"

"No, ma'am."

"Qu'elles sont impolies, ces filles Anglaises!" said Mademoiselle Leduc, the French teacher, with a frowning glance at Miss Glynn for her especial benefit.

"It is the nature of school girls to be so, mademoiselle," pertly responded Miss Glynn. "And I beg to remind you that we are not under your charge when we are out of school in the evening; therefore, whether we are 'impolies' or 'polies,' it is no affair of yours."

Mademoiselle Leduc only half comprehended the words; it was as well she did not. Miss Dale administered a sharp reprimand, and passed me my tea. I stirred it, tasted it, and stirred it again.

"Don't you like it?" asked a laughing girl next to me; Clara Webb, they called her.

I did not like it at all, and would rather have had milk and water. So far as flavour went, it might have been hot water coloured, was sweetened with brown sugar, and contained about a tea-

spoonful of milk. I never had any better tea, night or morning, so long as I remained : but school girls get used to these things. The teachers had a little black teapot to themselves, and their tea looked good. The plate of thin bread-and-butter was for them.

A very handsome girl of seventeen, with haughty eyes and still more haughty tones, craned her neck forward and stared at me. Some of the rest followed her example.

“ That child has nothing to eat,” she observed. “ Why don’t you hand the bread-and-butter to her, Webb ?”

Clara Webb presented the plate to me. It was so thick, the bread, that I hesitated to take it, and the butter was scraped upon it in a niggardly fashion ; but for my experience at Miss Fenton’s I should never have thought it possible for butter to have been spread so thin. The others were eating it with all the appetite of hunger. The slice was too thick to bite conveniently, so I had to manage as well as I could, listening—how could I avoid it ?—to a conversation the girls began among themselves in an under tone. To

hear them call each other by the surname alone had a strange sound. It was the custom of the school. The teachers were talking together, taking no notice of the girls.

“Hereford? Hereford?” debated the handsome girl, and I found her name was Tayler. “I wonder where she comes from?”

“I know who I saw her with last Sunday, when I was spending the day at home. The Hemsons.”

“What Hemsons? Who are they?”

“Hemsons the linendrapers.”

“Hemsons the linendrapers!” echoed an indignant voice, whilst I felt my own face turn to a glowing crimson. “What absurd nonsense you are talking, Glynn!”

“I tell you I did. I knew her face again the moment Linthorn brought her in. She came to church with them, and sat in their pew.”

“I don’t believe it,” coldly exclaimed an exceedingly ugly girl, with a prominent mouth. “As if Miss Fenton would admit that class of people! Glynn is playing upon our credulity; just as she did, do you remember, about that

affair of the prizes. We want some more bread-and-butter, Miss Dale—may we ring?”

“Yes, if you do want it,” replied Miss Dale, turning her face from mademoiselle to speak.

“Betsey, stop a moment, I have something to ask you!” suddenly called out one dressed in mourning, leaping over the form and darting after the maid, who had come in and was departing with the plate in her hand. A whispered colloquy ensued at the door, half in, half out of it; close to me, who was seated near it.

“I say, Betsey! Do you know who the new pupil is?”

“Not exactly, miss. Mrs. Hemson brought her.”

“Mrs. Hemson! There! Glynn said so! Are you sure?”

“I am quite sure, Miss Thorpe. Mrs. Hemson has been here several times this last week or two; I knew it was about a new pupil. And when she brought her to-night, she gave me half a crown, and told me to be kind to her. A nice lady is Mrs. Hemson as ever I spoke to.”

“I dare say she may be, for her station,” spoke

Miss Thorpe, going back to her seat with a stalk.

“ I say, girls—I have been asking Betsey—come close.” And they all huddled their heads together. “ I thought I’d ask Betsey : she says she does come from the Hemsons. Did you ever know such a shame ?”

“ It *can’t be*, you know,” cried the one with the large mouth. “ Miss Fenton would not dare to do it. Would my papa, a prebendary of the cathedral, allow me to be placed where I could be associated with tradespeople ?”

“ Ask Betsey for yourselves,” retorted Miss Thorpe. “ She says it was Mrs. Hemson who brought her to school.”

“ Nonsense about asking Betsey,” said Nancy Tayler ; “ ask herself. Come here, child,” she added, in a louder tone, beckoning to me.

I went humbly up, behind the form, feeling very humble indeed just then. They were nearly all older than I, and I began again to think it must be something sadly lowering to be connected with the Hemsons.

“Are you related to Hemsons, the shopkeepers?”

“Yes. To Mrs. Hemson. Mamma was——”

“Oh, there, that will do,” she unceremoniously interposed, with a scornful gesture. “Go back to your seat, and don’t sit too close to Miss Webb; she’s a gentleman’s daughter.”

My readers, you may be slow to believe this, but I can only say it occurred exactly as written. I returned to my seat, a terrible feeling of mortification having passed over my young life.

They never spoke to me again that evening. There was no supper, and at half-past eight we went up to bed; three smallish beds were in the room where I was to sleep, and one large one with curtains round it. The large one was Miss Dale’s, and two of us, I found, shared each of the smaller ones; my bedfellow was Clara Webb. She was a good-humoured girl, more careless upon the point of “family” than most of the rest seemed to be, and did not openly rebel at having to sleep with me. Miss Dale came up for the candle after we were in bed.

The bell rang at half-past six in the morning,

our signal for getting up : we had to be down by seven. There were studies till eight, and then breakfast—the same wretched tea, and the same coarse bread-and-butter. At half-past eight Miss Fenton read prayers ; and at nine the school business commenced.

At ten mademoiselle was assembling her German class. Seven only of the pupils learnt it. I rose and went up with them : and was rewarded with a stare.

“What will be the use of German to *her* ?” rudely cried Miss Peacock, a tall, stout girl, directing to me all the scorn of which a look is capable. “I should not fancy Miss Hereford is to learn German, Mademoiselle Leduc. It may be as well to inquire.”

Mademoiselle Leduc looked at me, hesitated, and then put the question to Miss Fenton, her imperfect English sounding through the room.

“Dis new young lady, is she to learn de German, madam ?”

Miss Fenton directed her eyes towards us.

“Miss Hereford ? Yes. Miss Hereford is to learn everything taught in my establishment.”

“ Oh !” said Nancy Tayler, *sotto voce*. “ Are you to be a governess, pray, Miss Hereford ?”

A moment’s hesitation between pride and truth, and then, with a blush of shame in my cheeks *for* the hesitation, came the brave answer.

“ I am to be a governess ; mamma gave the directions in her will. What fortune she left is to be expended upon my education, and she said there might be no better path of life open to me.”

“ That’s candid, at any rate,” cried Miss Peacock. And so I began German.

We dined at two ; and I don’t suppose but that every girl was terribly hungry. I know I was. With a scanty eight-o’clock breakfast, children ought not to wait until two for the next meal. We had to dress for dinner, which was laid in Miss Fenton’s dining-room, not in the bare place called the refectory ; Miss Fenton dining with us and carving. It was handsomely laid. A good deal of silver was on the table, with napkins and finger-glasses ; indeed, the style and serving were superior. Two servants waited : Betsey and another. The meat was roast beef—a part of beef I had never seen ; it seemed

a large lump of meat and no bone. Very acceptable looked it to us hungry school girls. We shall have plenty now, I thought.

My plate came to me at last ; *such* a little mite of meat, and three large potatoes ! I could well have put the whole piece of meat in my mouth at once. Did Miss Fenton fancy I disliked meat ? But upon looking at the other plates, I saw they were no better supplied than mine was ; plenty of potatoes, but an apology for meat.

“ Would we take more ? ” Miss Fenton asked, when we had despatched it. And the question was invariably put by her every day ; we as invariably answering “ Yes.” The servants took our plates up, and brought them back. I do not believe that the whole meat combined, supplied to all the plates in that second serving, would have weighed two ounces. Potatoes again we had, much as we liked, and then came a baked rice pudding.

Miss Fenton boasted of her plentiful table. That there was a plentiful dinner always placed on the table was indisputable, *but we did not get*

enough of it ; we were starved in the sight of plenty. I have seen a leg of mutton leave the table (nay, the joints always so left the table), when two hearty eaters might well have eaten all there was cut of it, and upon that the whole thirteen had dined ! I, a woman grown now, have seen much of this stingy, deceitful habit of carving, not only in schools, but in some private families. "We keep a plentiful table," many, who have to do with the young, will say. "Yes," I think to myself, "but do those you profess to feed, get helped to enough of it?" Sometimes, often indeed, two dishes were on the table ; we were asked which we would take, but never partook of both. The scanty breakfast, this dinner, and the tea I have described, were all the meals we had ; and this was a "select," "first-class" establishment, where the terms charged were high. Miss Fenton took her supper at eight, alone, and the teachers supped at nine in the refectory ; rumours were abroad in the school, that these suppers, or at least Miss Fenton's, were sumptuous meals. I know we often smelt savoury cooking at bedtime.

Sometimes we had pudding before meat, often we had cold meat, sometimes hashed, often meat pies, with a very thick crust over and under ; I do not fancy Miss Fenton's butcher's bill could have been a heavy one. Altogether, it recurs to me now like a fraud : a fraud upon the parents, a cruel wrong upon the children. A child who is not well nourished, will not possess too much of rude health and strength in after-life.

That was an unhappy day to me ! How I was despised, slighted, scorned, I cannot adequately describe. It became so palpable as to attract the attention of the teachers, and in the evening they inquired into the cause. Mademoiselle Leduc could not by any force of reasoning be brought to comprehend it ; she was unable to understand why I was not as good as the rest, and why they should not deem me so ; things are estimated so differently in France from what they are in England.

“ Bah ! ” said she, slightly, giving up as useless the trying to comprehend, “ elles sont folles, ces demoiselles.”

Miss Dale held a colloquy with one or two of

the elder girls, and then called me up. She began asking me questions about my studies, what mamma had taught me, how far I was advanced, all in a kind, gentle way; and she parted my hair on my forehead, and looked into my eyes.

“Your mamma was Mrs. Hemson’s sister,” she said presently.

“Not her sister, ma’am; her cousin.”

“Her cousin, was it?” she resumed after a pause. “What was your papa? I heard Miss Fenton say you were an orphan.”

“Papa?”

“I mean, in what position?—was he in trade?”

“He was an officer in her Majesty’s service. Colonel Hereford.”

“Colonel Hereford?” she returned, looking at me as though she wondered whether I was in error. “Are you sure?”

“Quite sure, Miss Dale. Mamma was Miss Carew of Keppe-Carew.”

“Miss Carew of Keppe-Carew!” she exclaimed, with a little scream of surprise; for the Keppe-Carews were of note in the world.

“Mrs. Hemson was a Keppe-Carew also,” I continued. “She forfeited her position to marry Mr. Hemson; and she says she has not repented it.”

Miss Dale paused; said she remembered to have heard the noise it made when a Miss Carew, of Keppe-Carew, quitted her home for a tradesman’s; but had never known that it related to Mrs. Hemson.

“I was a stranger to Dashleigh until I came here as teacher,” she observed, beckoning up the two young ladies, Miss Tayler and Miss Peacock.

“When next you young ladies take a prejudice against a new pupil, it may be as well to make sure first of all of your grounds,” she said to them, her tone sarcastic. “You have been sending this child to Coventry on the score of her not being your equal in point of family; let me tell you there’s not one of you in the whole school whose family is fit to tie the shoes of hers. She is the daughter of Colonel Hereford, and of Miss Carew of Keppe-Carew.”

They looked blank. Some of the other girls

raised their heads to listen. Miss Peacock and one or two more—as I found afterwards—were but the daughters of merchants; others of professional men.

“She is related to the Hemsons,” spoke Miss Peacock, defiantly. “She has acknowledged that she is.”

“If she were related to a chimney-sweep, that does not take from her own proper position,” returned Miss Dale, angrily. “Because a member of the Keppe-Carew family chose to forfeit her rank and sacrifice herself for Mr. Hemson, is Miss Hereford to be made answerable for it? Go away, you silly girls, and don’t expose yourselves again.”

The explanation had its weight in the school, and the tide set in for me as strenuously as it had been against me. The avowal that I was to be a governess appeared to be ignored or disbelieved, and the elder girls began a system of patronage.

“How much money have you brought, little Anne Hereford?”

I exhibited my purse and its three half-

crowns, all the money Mrs. Hemson had allowed me to bring.

“Seven and sixpence! That’s not much. I suppose you would wish to act in accordance with the custom of the school?”

I intimated that I of course should—if I knew what that was.

“Well, the rule is for a new girl to give a feast to the rest. We have it in the bedroom after Dale has been for the candle. Ten shillings has been the sum usually spent—but I suppose your three half-crowns must be made sufficient; you are but a little one.”

I wished to myself that they had left me one of the half-crowns, but could not for the world have said it. I wrote out a list of the articles suggested, and gave the money to one of the servants, Betsey, to procure them; doing all this according to directions. Cold beef and ham from the eating-house, rolls and butter, penny pork pies, small German sausages, jam tarts, and a bottle of raisin wine comprised the list.

Betsey smuggled the things in, and conveyed

them to the play-room. Strict orders meanwhile being given to me to say that I brought them to school in my box, should the affair, by mischance, be found out. It would be so cruel to get Betsey turned out of her place, they observed; but they had held many such treats, and never been found out yet.

Miss Dale came as usual for the candle that night, and took it. For a few minutes we lay still as mice, and then sprang up and admitted the rest from their bedroom. Half a dozen wax tapers were lighted, abstracted from the girls' private writing-desks, and half a dozen more were in readiness to be lighted, should the first not hold out. And the feast began.

"Now, Anne Hereford, it's your treat, so of course you are the one to wait upon us. You must go to the decanter for water when we want it, and listen at the door against eavesdroppers, and deal out the rolls. By the way, how many knives have come up? Look, Peacock."

"There's only one. One knife and two plates. Well, we'll make the counterpane or our hands do for plates."

“Our hands will be best, and then we can lick up the crumbs. Is the corkscrew there? Who’ll draw the cork of the wine?”

“Hush! don’t talk so loud; they are hardly at supper yet down stairs,” interposed Miss Tayler, who was the oldest girl in the school. “Now, mind! we’ll have no dispute about what shall be eaten first, as we had last time; it shall be served regularly. Beef and ham to begin with; pork pies and sausages next; jam tarts last; rolls and butter *ad libitum*; water with the feast, and the wine to finish up with. That’s the order of the day, and if any girl’s not satisfied with it, she can retire to bed, which will leave the more for us who are. You see that washhand-stand, little Hereford? Take the water-bottles there, and pour out as we want it; and put a taper near, or you may be giving yourself a bath. Now then, I’ll be carver.”

She cut the ham into ten portions, the beef likewise, and told me to give round a roll. Then the rolls were cut open and buttered, various devices being improvised for the latter necessity, by those who could not wait their turn for the

knife ; tooth-brush handles prevailing, and fingers not being altogether absent. Next came the delightful business of eating.

“ Some water, little Hereford.”

I obeyed, though it was just as I was about to take the first bite of the feast. Laying down my share on the counterpane, I brought the tumbler of water.

“ And now, Hereford, you must listen at the door.”

“ If you please, may I take this with me ?” for I had once more caught up the tantalizing supper.

“ Of course you can, little stupid !”

I went to the door, the beef and ham doubled up in one hand, the buttered roll in the other, and there eat and listened. The scene would have made a good picture. The distant bed on which the eatables were flung, and on which the tapers in their little bronze stands rested, and the girls in their night-gowns gathered round, half lounging on it, talking eagerly, eating ravenously, enjoying themselves thoroughly ; I shivering at the door, delighted with the feast, but half-terri-

fied lest interruption should come from below. That unlucky door had no fastening to it, so that any one could come, as the girls expressed it, bolt in. Some time previously there had been a disturbance, because the girls one night locked out Miss Dale, upon which Miss Fenton had carried away the key.

“Our beef and ham’s gone, Anne Hereford. Is yours?”

It was Georgina Digges who spoke, and she half-turned round to do so, for she was leaning forward on the bed with her back to me. I was about to answer, when there came a shrill scream from one of the others, a scream of terror. It was followed by another and another, until they were all screaming together, and I darted in alarm to the bed. Georgina Digges, in turning round, had let her nightgown sleeve touch one of the wax tapers, and set it on fire.

Oh, then was confusion! the shrieks rising and the flames with them. With a presence of mind perfectly astonishing in one so young, Nancy Tayler tore up the bedside carpet and flung it round her.

“Throw her down, throw her down! it is the only chance!” Nancy screamed to the rest, and there she was on the ground by the time those downstairs had rushed up. Some smothered more carpet on her, some threw a blanket, and the cook further poured out all the water from the wash-hand jugs.

“Who is it?” demanded Miss Fenton, speaking and looking more dead than alive.

None of us answered; we were too much terrified; but Miss Dale, who had been taking hurried note of our faces, said it must be Georgina Digges: her face was the only one missing.

I wonder what Miss Fenton thought when she saw the items of the feast as they lay on the bed! The scanty remains of the beef and ham, the buttered rolls half eaten, others ready to butter, the pork pies, the German sausages, the jam tarts, and the bottle of wine. Did a thought cross her that if the girls had been allowed better dinners, they might have been less eager for stolen suppers? *She* had probably been disturbed at her good supper, for a table napkin was tucked before her, underneath the string of her silk apron.

“You deceitful, rebellious girls!” exclaimed Miss Fenton. “Who has been the ringleader in this?”

A pause, and then a voice spoke from amidst the huddled group of girls—*whose* voice I did not know then and have never known to this day.

“The new girl, Anne Hereford. She brought the things to school in her box.”

Miss Fenton looked round for me: I was standing quite at the back. I had not courage to contradict the words. But just then a commotion arose from the group which stood round the burnt girl, and Miss Fenton turned to it in her sickening fear.

The doctors came, and we were consigned to bed, Georgina Digges being taken into another room. Happily, she was found not to be dangerously burnt, badly on the arm and shoulder, but no further.

Of course there was a great trouble in the morning. Mrs. Hemson was sent for, and to her I told the truth, which I had not dared to tell to Miss Fenton. The two ladies had afterwards an interview alone, in which I felt sure Mrs. Hem-

son repeated every word I had spoken. Nothing more was said to me. Miss Fenton made a speech in the school, beginning with a reproach at their taking a young child's money from her, and going on to the enormity of our offence in "sitting up at night to gormandize" (apologizing for the broad word), which she forbid absolutely for the future.

Thus the affair ended. Georgina Digges recovered, and joined us in the school-room: and she was not taken away, though we had thought she would be. But, in spite of the accident and Miss Fenton's prohibition, the feasts at night did go on, as often as a new girl came to be made to furnish one, or when the school subscribed a shilling each, and constituted it a joint affair. *One* little wax taper did duty in future, and that was placed on the mantelpiece, out of harm's way.

And that is all I shall have to say of my school-life in England.

CHAPTER VIII.

EMILY CHANDOS.

IN the gray dawn of an August morning, I stood on a steamer that was about to clear out from alongside one of the wharves near London Bridge. It was bound for a seaport town in France. Scarcely dawn yet, the night-clouds still hung upon the earth, but light was breaking in the eastern horizon. The passengers were coming on board—not many ; it did not appear that the boat would have much of a freight that day. I heard one of the seamen say so ; *I* knew nothing about it ; and the scene was as new to me as the world is to a bird, flying for the first time from a cage where it has been hatched and reared.

I was fifteen, and had left Miss Fenton's for good ; thoroughly well-educated, so far. And now they were sending me to a school in France to finish.

I will not say precisely where this school was situated : there are reasons against it ; but what little record I give of the establishment shall be true and faithful. It was not at Boulogne or at Calais, those renowned seaports, inundated with Anglo-French schools ; neither was it in Paris or Brussels, or at Dieppe. We can call the town Nulle, and that's near enough. It was kept by two ladies, sisters, the Demoiselles Barlieu. The negotiations had been made by my trustees and Mrs. Hemson had brought me to London, down to the steamer on this early morning, and was now consigning me to the care of Miss Barlieu's English governess, whom we had met there by appointment. She was a very plain young person, carrying no authority in appearance, and looking not much like a lady. Authority, as I found, she would have little in the school ; she was engaged to teach English, and there her duties ended.

" You had better secure a berth and lie down," she said to me. " The night has been cold and it is scarcely light enough yet to be on deck."

"Any ladies for shore?" cried a rough voice at the cabin door.

"Shore!" echoed Miss Johnstone, in what seemed alarm. "You are surely not going to start yet! I am waiting for another young lady."

"It won't be more than five minutes now, mum."

"A pupil?" I asked her.

"I believe so. Mademoiselle Barlieu wrote to me that two——"

"Any lady here of the name of Johnstone?"

The inquiry came from a middle-aged, quiet-looking person, who was glancing in at the cabin door. By her side stood a most elegant girl of seventeen, perhaps eighteen, her eyes blue, her face brilliantly fair, her dress handsome.

"I am Miss Johnstone," said the teacher, advancing.

"What a relief! The steward thought no governess had come on board, and I must not have dared to send Miss Chandos alone. My lady——"

"You would, Hill; so don't talk nonsense,"

interrupted the young lady, with a laugh, as she threw up her white veil, and brought her beauty right underneath the cabin lamp. "Would the fishes have swallowed me up any the quicker for not being in somebody's charge? Unfasten my cloak, Hill."

"This young lady is Miss Chandos, ma'am," said the person addressed as "Hill," presenting the beautiful girl to Miss Johnstone. "Please take every care of her in going across."

The young lady wheeled round. "Are you our new English teacher?"

"I am engaged as English governess at Mademoiselle Barlieu's," replied Miss Johnstone, who had not at all a pleasant manner of speaking. "She wrote word to me that I might expect Miss Chandos and Miss Hereford on board."

"Miss Hereford!" was the quick response. "Who is she?"

But by that time I was lying down on the berth, and the rough voice again interrupted.

"Any lady as is for shore had better look

sharp, unless they'd like to be took off to t'other side the Channel."

"What fun, Hill, if they should take you off!" laughed Miss Chandos, as the former started up with trepidation. "Now don't stumble overboard in your haste to get off the boat."

"Good-bye to you, Miss Emily, and a pleasant journey! You won't fail to write as soon as you arrive: my lady will be anxious."

"Oh, I will gladden mamma's heart with a letter, or she may be thinking the bottom of the steamer has come out," lightly returned Miss Chandos. "Mind, Hill, that you give my love to Mr. Harry when he gets home."

Those who were for shore went on shore, and soon we were in all the bustle and noise of departure. Miss Chandos stood by the small round table, looking in the hanging-glass, and turning her shining golden ringlets round her fingers. On one of those fingers was a ring, whose fine large stones formed a hearts-ease: two were yellow topaz, the other three dark amethyst: the whole beautiful.

“May I suggest that you should lie down, Miss Chandos?” said our governess for the time being. “You will find the benefit of doing so.”

“Have you crossed the Channel many times?” was the reply of Miss Chandos, as she coolly proceeded with her hair: and her tone to Miss Johnstone was a patronizing one.

“Only twice; to France and home again.”

“And I have crossed it a dozen times at least, between school and Continental voyages with mamma, so you cannot teach me much in that respect. I can assure you there’s nothing more disagreeable than to be stewed in one of these suffocating berths. When we leave the river, should it prove a rough sea, well and good; but I don’t put myself in a berth until then.”

“Have you been long with the Miss Barlieus?” inquired Miss Johnstone of her.

“Two dismal years. But I have outlived the dismality now—if you will allow me to coin a word. Mamma has known the Barlieus all her life: an aunt of theirs was her governess when she was young: and when we were returning home from Italy, mamma went to the place and

left me there, instead of taking me on to England. Was I not rebellious over it ! for three months I planned, every day, to run away on the next."

"But you did not?" I spoke up from my berth, greatly interested.

Miss Chandos turned round and looked at me. "No," she laughed, "it was never accomplished. I believe the chief impediment was, the not knowing where to run to. Are you the Miss Hereford?"

"Yes."

"What a bit of a child you seem ! You won't like a French school, if this is your first entrance to one. Home comforts and French schools are as far apart as the two poles."

"But I am not accustomed to home comforts ; I have no home. I have been for some years at an English school where there was little comfort of any sort. Do your friends live in England ? Have you a home there?"

"A home in England !" she answered, with some surprise at the question, or at my ignorance. "Of course : I am Miss Chandos. Chandos is

mamma's present residence ; though, strictly speaking, it belongs to Sir Thomas."

All this was so much Greek to me. Perhaps Miss Chandos saw that it was, for she laughed gaily.

"Sir Thomas Chandos is my brother. Harry is the other one. We thought Tom would have retired from the army and come home when papa died, two or three years ago ; but he still remains in India. Mamma writes him word that he should come home and marry, and so make himself into a respectable man ; he sends word back that he is respectable enough as it is."

"Your papa was——?"

"Sir Thomas Chandos. Ah, dear ! if he had but lived ! He was so kind to us ! Mamma is in widow's weeds yet, and always will be ?"

"And who was she who brought you on board ?"

"Hill. She is the housekeeper at Chandos. Some one has always taken me over until this time, generally Harry. But Harry is away, and Miss Barlieu wrote word to mamma that the

English governess could bring me, so Hill was despatched with me to town."

"What a beautiful ring that is!" I exclaimed, as the stones flashed in the lamp-light.

Her eyes fell upon it, and a blush and a smile rose to her face. She sat down on the edge of my berth, and twirled it over with the fingers of her other hand.

"Yes, it is a nice ring. Let any one attempt to give me a ring that is not a nice one; they would get it flung back at them."

"Is Mademoiselle Barlieu's a large school?"

"Middling. There were seventy-five last trimestre."

"Seventy-five!" I repeated, amazed at the number.

"That includes the externes—nearly fifty of them—with whom we have nothing to do. There are three class-rooms: one for the elder girls, one for the younger, and the third (it's the size almost of the large hall at the Tribunal of Commerce) for the externes."

"Are there many teachers?"

"Six, including the English governess and the

two Miss Barlieus ; and six masters, who are in nearly constant attendance."

"Altogether, do you like being there?"

"Yes," she said, laughing significantly, "I like it very well *now*. I am going on deck to watch the day break ; so adieu for the present."

We had a rough passage ; of which I cannot think to this day without—without wishing not to think of it ; and late in the afternoon the steamer was made fast to the port it was bound for. In the midst of the bustle preparatory to landing, a gentleman, young, vain, and good-looking, leaped on board, braving the douaniers, who were too late to prevent him, and warmly greeted Miss Chandos.

"My dear Emily !"

"Speak in French, Alfred," she said, taking the initiative and addressing him in the language—her damask cheeks, her dimples, and her dancing eyes all being something lovely to behold. "I have not come alone, as I thought I should. A duenna, in the shape of the English governess, has charge of me."

“Miss Chandos, the men are calling out that we must land.”

The interruption came from Miss Johnstone, who had approached, looking keenly at the gentleman. The latter, with scant courtesy to the governess, made no reply: he was too much occupied in assisting Miss Chandos up the landing-steps. Miss Chandos turned her head when she reached the top.

“Be so good as to look in the cabin, Miss Johnstone; I have left a hundred things there, odds and ends. My warm cloak is somewhere.”

Miss Johnstone appeared anything but pleased. It is not usual for pupils to order their teachers to look after their things; and Miss Chandos was of somewhat imperious manner: not purposely: it was her nature. I turned with Miss Johnstone, and we collected together the items left by Miss Chandos. By the time we got to the custom-house, she had disappeared. Twenty minutes after, when we and our luggage had been examined, we found her outside, walking to and fro with the gentleman.

“Where are your boxes, Miss Chandos?” asked Miss Johnstone.

“My boxes? I don’t know anything about them. I gave my keys to one of the commissionaires; he will see to them. Or you can, if you like.”

“I do not imagine that it is my business to do so,” was Miss Johnstone’s offended reply. But Miss Chandos was again walking with her companion, and paid no heed to her.

“Halloa, De Mellissie! have you been to England?” inquired a passing Englishman of Miss Chandos’s friend.

“Not I,” he replied. “I stepped on board the boat when it came in, so they took their revenge by making me go through the custom-house and turning my pockets inside out. Much good it did them!”

An omnibus was waiting round the corner, in which we were finally to be conveyed to our destination, Mademoiselle Barlieu’s. Seated in it was a little, stout, good-tempered dame of fifty, Mademoiselle Caroline, the senior teacher. She received Miss Chandos with open arms, and a

kiss on each cheek. The gentleman politely handed us by turn into the omnibus, and stood bowing to us, bareheaded, as we drove away.

“Do you think him handsome?” Miss Chandos whispered to me, the glow on her face fading.

“Pretty well. What is his name?”

“Alfred de Mellissie. You can be good-natured, can’t you?” she added.

“I can, if I like.”

“Then be so now, and don’t preach it out to the whole school that he met me. He——”

“Is that gentleman a relative of yours, Miss Chandos?” interrupted Miss Johnstone from the end of the omnibus.

Miss Chandos did not like the tone or the question: the one savoured of acrimony, the other she resented as impertinent. She fixed her haughty blue eyes on Miss Johnstone before she answered: they said very plainly, “By what right do you presume to inquire of me?” and Miss Johnstone bit her lips at the look.

“They are not related to us. Madame de Mellissie is an intimate friend of my mother, Lady Chandos.” And that was all she conde-

scended to say, for she turned her back and began laughing and chattering in French with Mademoiselle Caroline.

The Miss Barlieus received us graciously, giving us all the same friendly greeting that the old teacher had given only to Miss Chandos. Two pleasant, kind-hearted maiden ladies were they, not very young. Miss Annette confessed to having passed thirty-five. We were their visitors that evening, and were regaled with nice things in their own parlour.

I said I would relate the mode of treatment in that school. It was a superior establishment, the terms high *for France*; but they were not much more than half the amount of Miss Fenton's. Here they included the month's holiday at Autumn. At Miss Fenton's the holidays were three months in the year; and if you stayed (as I did), extra money had to be paid.

The dormitories were spacious and airy, a small, separate, thoroughly clean bed being given to each pupil. No French school can be overcrowded, for they are under the close in-

spection of the Government ; and the number of pupils to be taken is registered. A large airy room is set apart as an infirmary, should any fall sick.

Clang ! clang ! clang ! went the great bell in the morning, waking us out of our sleep at six. Dressing, practising, lessons, and prayers, occupied the time until eight. Miss Johnstone read prayers to the English pupils, all Protestants ; Mademoiselle Caroline read them to the French, who were Roman Catholics. For breakfast there was as much bread and butter as we liked to eat, and a small basin each of good rich milk. Some of the English girls chose tea in preference, which they were at liberty to do. On Sunday mornings the breakfast was a treat : coffee and *petits pains*, a sort of roll. We had them hot, two each, and a small pat of butter. Such coffee as that we never get in England : one-third coffee, two-thirds hot milk, and strong then. Breakfast over (to go back to the week days), we played till nine, and then came studies until twelve.

The professed dinner hour was half past

twelve, but the cook rarely sent in before a quarter to one. We all dined together with Miss Barlieu and Miss Annette, at two long tables. I remember the dinner, that first day, as well as though I had eaten it yesterday. A plateful of soup first, very poor, as all French soup is; after that the bouilli, the meat that the soup is made of. The English at first never like this bouilli, but in time they learn to know how good it is, eaten with the French piquante mustard. Sometimes carrots were served with the bouilli, sometimes small pickled cucumbers: this day we had cucumbers. Remembering Miss Fenton's, I wondered if that comprised the dinner—and, talking of Miss Fenton's, I have never mentioned that in her house we were not allowed bread at dinner; here, if we could have eaten a whole loaf, we might have had it.

It did not comprise the dinner; there came on some delicious roast veal and potatoes; and afterwards fried pancakes, with sugar. On Sundays we sometimes had poultry, always a second dish of vegetables, and a fruit or cream tart. The drink was the same as at Miss

Fenton's,—beer or water, as might be preferred. Four or five of the girls had wine; but it was either supplied by the parents, or paid for as an extra. It was commonly reported that in some other schools, in the colleges especially, the soup, the bouilli, bread and potatoes, comprised the dinner *every day*, with a roast joint in addition on Sundays.

At two o'clock came school again until four, when we were released for half an hour, and had each a slice of bread and butter, called collation. Then school again until six, and supper at seven. The suppers varied; meat was never served, but vegetables were often: sometimes bread and cheese and salad; or bread and butter, with an egg, or with shrimps, or fried potatoes; and tea to drink. I think this was a more sensible mode of living than Miss Fenton's: altogether I can truly say that we experienced liberality and kindness at Miss Barlieu's; it was a far better home than the other.

But I have not got past the first day yet. In assorting her clothes after unpacking, Miss Chandos missed a new velvet mantle; there was

some commotion about it, and she was told that she ought to have watched more narrowly the visiting her trunks in the custom-house. Miss Chandos took the loss equably, as she appeared to do most things. "Oh, if it's lost, mamma must send me over another," was her careless comment.

We were at our studies in the afternoon when Mademoiselle Annette entered. The mode of sitting was different here from what it had been at Miss Fenton's. There, we sat on a hard form for hours together without any support for the arms or back : stooping was the inevitable consequence, and many of the girls got a curve in the spine ; or, as the saying ran, "grew aside." In France we sat at a sloping desk, on which our arms rested, so that the spine could not get fatigued : I never once, the whole period I stayed at Miss Barlieu's, saw a crooked girl. Mademoiselle Annette entered and accosted Miss Chandos.

"I understand, Miss Chandos, that you did not take any care of your boxes yourself at the custom-house ; merely gave up your keys?"

A slight accession of colour, and Miss Chandos

turned round her fair bright face, acknowledging that it was so.

“But, my dear, that was evincing great carelessness.”

“I don’t see it, Mademoiselle Annette,” was Miss Chandos’s smiling dissent. “What are the commissionaires for, but to take charge of keys, and examine baggage?”

“Well, they have been up from the customs to say that the mantle was not left there. The commissionaire himself is here now; he says everything taken out of your boxes was safely put in again.”

“It was a beautiful mantle, Mademoiselle Annette, and I dare say somebody caught it up and ran away with it when the man’s attention was turned the other way. It can’t be helped: there are worse misfortunes at sea.”

“What gentleman was it that you were walking about with?” resumed Mademoiselle Annette.

“Gentleman?” returned Miss Chandos, in a questioning tone, as if she could not understand, or did not remember. “Gentleman, Mademoiselle Annette?”

“A gentleman who came on board to speak to you ; and who assisted you to land ; and with whom you were walking about afterwards, while the other ladies were in the custom-house ?”

“Oh, I recollect ; yes. There was a gentleman who came on board : it was Monsieur de Mellissie.” Very brilliant had Miss Chandos’s cheeks become ; but she turned her face to the desk as if anxious to continue her studies, and Mademoiselle Barlieu saw it not.

“What took him on board ?” resumed Mademoiselle Annette.

“As if I knew, Mademoiselle Annette !” lightly replied the young lady. “He may have wanted to speak to the captain—or to some of the sailors—or to me. He did not tell me.”

“But you were promenading with him afterwards !”

“And very polite of him it was to give up his time to promenade with me, while I was waiting for them to come out,” replied Miss Chandos. “I returned him my thanks for it, Mademoiselle Annette. If the new English teacher had had a thousand boxes to clear, she

could not have been much longer over it. I thought she was never coming."

"Well, my dear, do not promenade again with Monsieur de Mellissie. It is not the right thing for a young lady to do; and Miladi Chandos might not be pleased that you should."

"On the contrary, Mademoiselle Annette, mamma charged me with twenty messages to give him, in trust for his mother," replied the undaunted girl. "I was glad of an opportunity of delivering them."

Mademoiselle Annette said no more. She charged the girls as she quitted the room to get ready their geography books, for she should return for that class in five minutes.

"I say, Emily Chandos, whatever is all that about?" asked a young lady, Ellen Roper.

"I don't care! It's that new English teacher who has been reporting! Alfred jumped on board as soon as we touched the side, and I stayed with him until the omnibus was ready—or until we were ready for the omnibus. Where was the harm? *You* did not tell, Anne Hereford?"

"I have not spoken of it to any one."

“No ; I was sure of that : it’s that precious teacher. I did not like her before, but for this I’ll give her all the trouble I can at my English lessons. Such folly for Mademoiselle Barlieu to engage a girl as governess ; and she’s no better. I could teach her. She’s not nice, either ; you can’t like or respect her.”

“I think the Miss Barlieus were surprised when they saw her,” observed Ellen Roper. “Mademoiselle Annette asked her this morning if she were really twenty-one. So that is the age she must have represented herself to be in writing to them.”

In the course of a day or two Emily Chandos received a letter from home. Lady Chandos had discovered that the velvet mantle, by some unaccountable mischance, had not been put into the boxes. She would forward it to Nulle.

The De Mellissies were staying in the town. Madame de Mellissie, the mother, an English lady by birth, had been intimate with Lady Chandos in early life ; they were good friends still. Her son, and only child, Monsieur Alfred de Mellissie, chief of the family now in place of

his dead father, appeared to make it the whole business of his life to admire Emily Chandos. The school commented on it.

“It can never lead to anything,” they said. “He is only a Frenchman of *comme-ça* family, and she is Miss Chandos of Chandos.”

And—being Miss Chandos of Chandos—it occurred to me to wonder that she should be at that French school. Not but that it was superior—one of the first to be found in France; but scarcely the place for Miss Chandos.

I said as much—talking one day with Mademoiselle Annette, when I was by her, drawing.

“My dear, Emily Chandos, though one of the most charming and loveable girls ever seen, is inclined to be wild; and Miladi Chandos thinks the discipline of a school good for her,” was the answer. “They do not care to have a governess residing at Chandos.”

“But why, mademoiselle?”

Mademoiselle Annette shook her head mysteriously. “I know not. Miladi said it to me. She is altered terribly. There is always a cloud hanging over Chandos. Go on with your

sketch, my dear: young ladies should not be curious."

One of the first questions put to me by the girls was—were any names given in for my visiting. I did not understand the question. We elder ones were seated at the desk-table, doing German exercises—or pretending to do them. Miss Barlieu had found me so well advanced, that I was put in the first classes for every study. Ellen Roper saw I looked puzzled, and explained.

"When a pupil is placed at school in France, her friends give in the names of the families where she may visit, and the governess writes them down. It is not a bad custom."

"It is a miserable custom, Ellen Roper," retorted Miss Chandos. "When the Stapletons were passing through Nulle last Spring they invited me to the hotel for a day, and Mademoiselle Barlieu put her veto upon it, because their name had not been given in by mamma. Lady Stapleton came and expostulated; said her husband, Sir Gregory, was the oldest friend possible of the late Sir Thomas Chandos, had been for years,

and that they would take every imaginable care of me, and she knew Lady Chandos would wish me to go. Not a bit of it; you might as well have tried to move the house as to move Mademoiselle Barlieu. Miladi Chandos had not given her the name, she said, and she could not depart from the usual custom. Don't you remember what a passion I was in? Cried my eyes out, and would not do a single *devoir*. Anne Hereford, you can write home and ask them to give in some names to Miss Barlieu."

Home! What home had I to write to?

CHAPTER IX.

A STEP IRREVOCABLE.

THERE was war between the English governess and Emily Chandos. Emily was excessively popular; with her beauty, her gaiety, and her generous wilfulness: she did nearly what she liked in the school—except of course with the Miss Barlieus. For myself, I had learnt to love her. She had her faults—what girl is without them? She was vain, petulant, haughty when displeased, and a little selfish. But she possessed one great gift of attraction—that of taking hearts by storm. Miss Johnstone began by a mistake: the striving to put down Miss Chandos. She was over-strict besides with her lessons and exercises; and more than once reported her to Miss Annette for some trifling fault, magnified by her into a grave one. The girls espoused Emily's cause; and Miss John-

stone grew to be regarded, and also treated, with contempt. It vexed her greatly; and there were other things.

Her name was Margaret. But she had incautiously left an open letter about, in which she was repeatedly called "Peg." Of course that was quite enough for the girls, and they took to call her Peg, almost in her hearing. A new English pupil, who entered as weekly boarder, went up at the English dictation and addressed her as "Miss Pegg," believing it to be her real name. You should have seen Miss Johnstone's dark and angry face, and the dancing eyes of Emily Chandos.

Madame de Mellissie had left for Paris; but her son, Monsieur Alfred, remained at Nulle—his attraction being, as the girls said openly, Emily Chandos. Emily laughed as she listened: but denial she made none. They said another thing—that the beautiful hearts-ease ring she wore had been his love-gift: and still there was no express denial. "Have it so if you like," was all Emily said.

"She cannot think *seriously* of him, you

know," Ellen Roper observed one day. "It is a match that could never be allowed by her family. He is quite a second-rate sort of Frenchman, and she is Miss Chandos of Chandos. He is a bit of a jackanapes too, vain and silly."

"Ellen Roper, I am within hearing, I beg to inform you," said Miss Chandos, from half way up the desk, her face in a lovely glow.

"That is just why I said it," returned Ellen Roper, who, however, had not known Emily was near, and started at the sound of her voice. "I dare say he has not above a thousand pounds or two a year; a very fair patrimony for a Frenchman, you know; but only fancy it for one in the position of Miss Chandos."

"Go on, Ellen Roper! I'll tell something of you by-and-by."

"And, setting aside everything else, there's another great barrier," went on Ellen Roper, making objections very strong in her spirit of mischief. "The De Mellissies are Roman Catholics; cela va, you know; while the Chandos family are staunch Conservative Protestants. Lady Chandos would almost as soon give Emily

to the Grand Turk as to Alfred de Mel-lissie."

A sort of movement at the desk, and we looked round. Quietly seated on the low chair in the corner, her ears drinking in all, for we had been speaking in English, was Miss Johnstone. Had she been there all the time? Emily Chandos's bright cheek paled a little, as if there had fallen upon her a foreshadowing of ill.

I do not know that it would have come, but that circumstances worked for it. On this afternoon, this very same afternoon as we sat there, Emily was called out of the room by one of the maids, who said Mrs. Trehern had called to see her.

"Trehern?—Trehern?" cried Emily, as she went. "I don't know the name from Adam."

Back she soon came with a radiant face, and presented herself to Mademoiselle Annette, who was in class.

"Oh, mademoiselle, some friends are here, and they wish me to go out with them. Will you give me permission? It is Mr. and Mrs. Trehern."

“Trehern ? Trehern ?” repeated Mademoiselle Annette. “I don’t remember that name on your visiting list.”

Emily knew quite well it was not there, since this was the first time she had seen either of the parties : but she had trusted to the good luck of Mademoiselle Annette’s believing that it was.

“Mamma will be so vexed if I do not go. She is very intimate with the Treherns. They have only just arrived at the town, mademoiselle, and have descended at the Hotel du Lion d’Or.”

Which concluding words gave us the clue to Emily’s eagerness for the visit. For it was at that renowned hotel that Mr. Alfred de Mellissie had been sojourning since his mother’s departure. Mademoiselle Annette was firm.

“You know the rules of the school, my dear. We have heard nothing of these gentlepeople from your mamma, and it is impossible that you can be allowed to go.”

Emily Chandos carried back her excuses to the salon, and after school gave vent to her mortification in a private outburst to us.

“Such a dreadful shame, these horrid French

rules ! As if the Treherns would have poisoned me ! But I despatch a letter to mamma to-night to get permission. They are going to stay a month at Nulle. It is the bridal tour."

"Have they just come from England?"

"Not at all. She is French, and never was in England in her life. She is a friend"—dropping her voice still lower—"of the De Mellissies ; at least her mother is : it was through Alfred they called upon me to-day."

"Then does Lady Chandos not know them?"

"She knows him. It is a Cornish family. This one, young Trehern, fell in love with a French girl, and has married her. They were married last Thursday, she told me. She had the most ravishing toilette on to-day : a white and blue robe : you might have taken it for silver. She's nearly as young as I am."

The letter despatched to Lady Chandos by Emily set forth the praises of Mrs. Trehern, and especially dwelt upon the fact that her mother was a "dear friend" of Madame de Mellissie. Not a word said it, though, that Mr. Alfred de Mellissie was sojourning at the Lion d'Or : or

at Nulle. And there came back permission from Lady Chandos for Emily to visit them: she wrote herself to Miss Barlieu, desiring that it might be so. Emily was in her glory.

A great apparent friendship sprang up between her and young Mrs. Trehern, who was something like herself, inexperienced and thoughtless. She was of good family, pleasing in manners, and quite won the hearts of the Miss Barlieus. Relatives of hers, the De Rosnys, lived in their château near Nulle—the cause of her passing sojourn there. We school-girls remembered how Maximilian de Bethune, the young Baron de Rosny, had been the envoy despatched by Henri le Grand to solicit assistance of Queen Elizabeth, in the years subsequent to the great slaughter of the Huguenots. We assumed that Mrs. Trehern might be of the same family; but did not know it.

Often and often she arrived at the school to take out Emily Chandos. At length the Miss Barlieus began to grumble: Mademoiselle Chandos went out too frequently, and her studies were getting in arrear. Emily protested it was

her mamma's wish and pleasure that she should take advantage of the sojourn of Mrs. Trehern to go out, and exhibited part of a letter from Lady Chandos, in which the same appeared to be intimated. Mademoiselle Annette shook her head, and said it was a good thing the month of Mrs. Trehern's stay was drawing to its close.

Now it happened about this time that an uncle of Miss Johnstone's passed through Nulle on his way to Paris, staying for a day at the Hotel du Lion d'Or. He invited his niece to go to see him, saying she might bring any one of the young ladies with her. She chose me, to my own surprise : perhaps the reason was that I had never taken an active part in annoying her as some of the rest had. The Miss Barlieus allowed me to go ; for they looked upon it, not that I was about to pay an indiscriminate visit, but going out with one of the governesses, under her safe convoy and companionship.

"Where are you off to, little Hereford," demanded Emily Chandos, who was attiring herself before the one glass in the bed-room when I

went up, for she was to spend the afternoon with the Treherns.

“ Miss Johnstone’s uncle is at the Lion d’Or, and she has asked me to dinner there. We are to dine at the table d’hôte.”

“ The Lion d’Or !” cried Emily, turning round. “ What a chance ! to have that sharp-sighted duenna, Peg, dining at table with us !”

“ What, do you—do the Treherns dine at the table d’hôte ?”

“ Where else should they dine ? The hotel is too full, just now, to admit of private dinners.”

Mr. Johnstone came for us, and we walked about, looking at the old town, until six o’clock, the dinner hour. A novel scene to me was that crowded dining-room, with its array of company, of waiters, and of good cheer ; so novel that for some time I did not notice four seats, immediately opposite to us, quite vacant. All eyes were raised at the four who came in to fill them. Mr. and Mrs. Trehern ; she dressed elaborately, perfectly ; not a fold of her robe out of place, not a hair of her many braids ; Alfred de Mellissie, with his airs of a petit maître, but good-looking enough ;

and Emily Chandos, with her gay and sparkling beauty.

“Just look there, Miss Hereford! do you see that?”

Miss Johnstone’s words were spoken in a low tone of consternation. I *would not* understand to whom she alluded.

“See what, Miss Johnstone?”

“Miss Chandos,” she answered, devouring Emily with her eyes. “I wonder if the Demoiselles Barlieu know that while she has been pretending to visit the Treherns, it has been a cloak for her meeting that Frenchman?”

“Oh, Miss Johnstone! she *has* visited the Treherns.”

“I can see through a mill-stone,” was Miss Johnstone’s cold answer.

Never were more defiant looks cast upon a governess than Emily Chandos threw over the table at Miss Johnstone. That the latter provoked them by her manner there was no doubt. I think—I always had thought—that she was envious of Miss Chandos, though whence or why the feeling should have arisen I cannot say. They

were the most distinguished group at table, Mr. Trehern—a fine, big, burly Cornishman—and his wife, Monsieur de Mellissie and Emily: and the waiters treated them with marked distinction. Even the appurtenances of their dinner were superior, for none others within the range of my view ventured upon sparkling Moselle and ice. They rose from table earlier than many, Emily throwing me a laughing nod, as she took Mr. Trehern's arm, Alfred de Mellissie following with Mrs. Trehern; but not vouchsafing the slightest notice of Miss Johnstone.

“She may take her leave of it,” I heard the latter whisper to herself.

Mr. Johnstone did not mend the matter, or his niece's temper. “What a lovely girl that is!” he exclaimed. “She is English.”

“Yes,” answered Miss Johnstone, her lips parting with acrimony. “She is one of my pupils.”

“One of your pupils! How is it she took no notice of you?”

Miss Johnstone made no reply, but the acrimony on her lips grew sharper: very sharp in-

deed when she saw Emily escorted home by M. de Mellissie, with Mrs. Trehern's maid in attendance.

The explosion came next day. Miss Johnstone lodged a formal complaint in private before the Miss Barlieus. Miss Chandos, she felt perfectly certain, was being made clandestine love to by Monsieur Alfred de Mellissie!

"Seated at the table d'hôte with the young man!—accompanied by him home afterwards!" cried Mademoiselle Annette. "It is not to be believed."

Miss Johnstone said it was, and called me as a witness. Emily Chandos was commanded to the salon, and questioned.

She could not deny it; she did not attempt it: rather braved it out.

"Where was the harm of it, Mademoiselle Annette? Monsieur de Mellissie did not attempt to eat me."

"You know that the customs and ideas of our country are against this kind of thing," emphatically pronounced Miss Barlieu. "I am surprised at you, Mademoiselle Emily; you have

deceived us. I shall write to Miladi your mother to-day. If she sanctions this public visiting, I cannot. I cannot possibly allow any young lady in my establishment to run the risk of being talked of as imprudent. You will not go to Mrs. Trehern again ; she has shown herself little capable of taking care of you."

"Do you mean, mademoiselle, that I am not to go out in future when invited?" asked Emily, her heart beating visibly.

"I shall very unmistakeably point out to your mamma the desirability of your not again going out to visit ; certainly you will not while Monsieur de Mellissie remains at Nulle," was the pointed reply of Miss Barlieu.

And Emily Chandos knew that her liberty was over. But for this, would she have taken the irrevocable step she did take. Alas ! it was soon too late to speculate.

An immediate reply came from Lady Chandos, interdicting all indiscriminate visiting for Emily ; and saying that she must make good use of her time in study, as she would leave school early in the spring.

Did the arrival of that letter expedite the catastrophe? I cannot tell. It was known that Madame de Mellissie, the mother, was at Nulle again, and a very short while went on.

We were doing English with Miss Johnstone one afternoon, when Mrs. Trehern called. Emily was allowed to see her, but Mademoiselle Barlieu accompanied her to the salon. Some sort of explanation took place, and Mrs. Trehern was informed that Miss Chandos could not visit her again. She left, and Emily returned to the class, but the English lesson was over then. Over in disgrace, for none of us had done well; at least, Miss Johnstone said we had not. By way of punishment, she protested she should make us finish it after supper.

We had bread-and-butter and shrimps for supper that night—I shall always remember it; and we prolonged it as much as we could, drinking three cups of tea each, and eating as many shrimps as we could get. Emily Chandos did not appear, and Mademoiselle Caroline—who had viewed the scandal, touching Alfred de Mellissie, with shocked displeasure—would not

allow her to be called, saying she was "sulking." But the supper, spin it out as we would, could not last all night, and Miss Johnstone, as good as her word, called us up with our English books.

"Go and find Miss Chandos," she said to me. "She has chosen to go without her supper, but she shall not escape her lesson."

Emily was not to be found. Amidst a search of commotion, the like of which I had never seen, it was discovered that she had quitted the house. The De Mellissies, the next inquired for, had quitted the town. A telegraphic message went to Chandos, and Mademoiselle Barlieu took to her bed with chagrin.

The despatch brought back Mr. Chandos, Emily's brother. About the same hour that he arrived, a letter was received from London from M. Alfred de Mellissie, saying that he and Miss Chandos had just been married by special licence, and also by the rites of the Romish Church. That his English mother had aided and abetted the step, although she did not accompany them in their flight to England, there was no question of.

Miss Barlieu saw Mr. Chandos in her chamber ;

the affair had made her really ill. Afterwards, as I was passing down the stairs, he came forth from the drawing-room from an interview with Miss Annette. She was talking very fast, her eyes streaming with grief, and Mr. Chandos strove to soothe her.

“It all comes of that indiscriminate visiting, sir, that was allowed to Mademoiselle Chandos,” she said, with bitter tears. “I told my sister ten times that Miladi Chandos was wrong to permit it. Ah! sir, we shall not ever get over the blow. Nothing of the kind has ever happened to us.”

“Do not distress yourself,” Mr. Chandos answered. “I can see that no shadow of blame rests with you. That lies with Emily and the De Mellissies: my sister’s fortune is a great prize to a Frenchman.”

What made me gather myself into a nook of the wall, and gaze upon Mr. Chandos, as he passed out in the dusk of the evening? Not the deep, mellow tones—not the sweet accent of voice in which his words were spoken. That they were all that, my ear told me; but something else had

struck upon me—his face and form. Where had I seen him?

Somewhere, I felt certain. The contour of the pale face, with its fine and delicate features; something in the tall, slim figure, even in the manner of turning his head as he spoke: all seemed to touch on a chord of my memory. Where, where could I have seen Mr. Chandos?

The question was not solved, and time went steadily on again.

CHAPTER X.

AT MRS. PALER'S.

NINETEEN years of age. Nineteen ! For the last twelvemonth, since the completion of my education, I had helped in the school as one of the governesses. The Miss Barlieus, whose connection was extensive amidst the English as well as the French, had undertaken the responsibility of "placing me out," as my trustees phrased it. When I was eighteen their task, as trustees, was over, and the annuity I had enjoyed ceased. Henceforth I had no friends in the world but the Miss Barlieus : and truly kind and good those ladies were to me.

I was attacked with an illness soon after my eighteenth birthday : not a severe one, but lasting tolerably long ; and that had caused me to remain the additional twelvemonth, for which I received a slight salary. They liked me, and I liked them.

So I was to be a governess after all ! The last descendant of the Herefords and the Keppe-Carews had no home in the world, no means of living, and must work for them. My pride rebelled against it now, as it never had when I was a child ; and I made a resolution never to talk of my family. I was an orphan ; I had no relatives living : that would be quite enough answer when asked about it. Keppe-Carew had again changed masters : a little lad of eight, whose dead father I had never seen, and who perhaps had never heard of me, was its owner now.

I had never heard a syllable of Mr. Edwin Barley since I left him, or of any of his household, or of the events that had taken place there. That George Heneage had never been traced, I knew ; that Mr. Edwin Barley was still seeking after him, I was quite sure : the lapse of years could not abate the anger of a man like him. Mrs. Hemson was dead now, a twelvemonth past ; so that I was entirely alone in the world. As to the will, it had not been found, as was to be supposed, or the money would have been mine. My growth in years, the passing from the little

girl into the woman, and the new ties and interests of my foreign school life, had in a degree obliterated those unhappy events, and I scarcely ever gave even a thought to the past.

Mr. and Mrs. Paler were staying temporarily at Nulle ; well-connected English people, about to fix their residence in Paris. They were strangers to me personally, but the Miss Barlieus knew something of their family, and we heard that Mrs. Paler was inquiring for a governess ; one who spoke thoroughly English, French, and German. Mademoiselle Annette thought it might suit me, and proposed to take me to call on them at the Lion d'Or hotel.

I seized upon the idea eagerly. The word Paris had wrought its own charm. To be conveyed to that city of delight appeared only secondary to entering within the precincts of a modern Elysium.

“ Oh, Mademoiselle Annette, pray let us go ! I might perhaps do for them.”

Mademoiselle Annette laughed at the eagerness so unequivocally betrayed. But she set off with me the same day.

The Lion d'Or was full. Mr. and Mrs. Paler had no private sitting-room (there were only two salons in the whole house), and we were ushered into their chamber, French fashion. Mr. Paler was a stout man in gold spectacles, shy and silent; his wife, a tall handsome woman with large eyes and dark hair, talked enough for both. Some conversation ensued, chiefly taken up by Mrs. Paler explaining the sort of governess she wished for, Mr. Paler having quitted us.

“If you require a completely well-educated young lady—a gentlewoman in every sense of the term—you cannot do better than engage Miss Hereford,” said Mademoiselle Annette.

“But what’s her religion?” abruptly asked Mrs. Paler. “I would not admit a Roman Catholic into the bosom of my family; no, not though she paid me to come. Designing Jesuits, as a great many of them are!”

Which, considering she was speaking to a Roman Catholic, and that a moment’s consideration might have told her she was evinced anything but courtesy on the lady’s part, to say

nothing of good feeling. Mademoiselle Annette's brown cheek deepened, and so did mine.

"I belong to the Church of England, madam," I answered.

"And with regard to singing?" resumed Mrs. Paler, passing to another qualification unceremoniously. "Have you a fine voice?—a good style?—can you teach it well?"

"I sing but little, and should not like to teach it. Neither am I a very brilliant player. I have no great forte for music. What I do play I play well, and I can teach it well."

"There it is! Was there ever anything so tiresome?" grumbled Mrs. Paler. "I declare you cannot have everything, try as you will. Our last governess was first-rate in music—quite a divine voice she had—and her style perfect; but, of all the barbarous accents in French and German (not to speak of her wretched grammar), hers were the worst. Now, you are a good linguist, but no hand at music! What a worry it is!"

"May I ask what age your children are?" interposed Mademoiselle Annette, who could

speak sufficient English to understand and join in the conversation.

“The eldest is twelve.”

“Then I can assure you Miss Hereford is quite sufficient musician for what you will want at present, madam. It is not always the most brilliant players who are the best instructors; our experience has taught us the contrary is the ease.”

Mrs. Paler mused. “Does Miss Hereford draw?”

“Excellently well,” replied Mademoiselle Annette.

“I have a great mind to try her,” debated Mrs. Paler, as if soliloquizing with herself. “But I must just pay my husband the compliment of asking what he thinks: though I never allow any opinion of his to influence me. He is the shyest man! he went out, you saw, as you came in. I am not sure but he will think Miss Hereford too good looking; but she has a very dignified air with her, though her manners are charmingly simple.”

“When you have considered the matter,

madam, we shall be glad to receive your answer," observed Mademoiselle Annette, as she rose. And Mrs. Paler acquiesced.

"Anne," began Mademoiselle Annette, as we walked home, "I do not think that situation will suit you. You will not be comfortable in it."

"But why?" I asked, feeling my golden visions of Paris dimmed by the words. "I think it would perfectly suit me, mademoiselle."

"Madame Paler is not a nice lady; she is not a gentlewoman. I question, too, if she would make you comfortable."

"I am willing to risk it. You and Mademoiselle Barlieu have told me all along that I cannot expect everything."

"That is true, my child. Go where you will, you must look out for disagreeables and crosses. The lives of all of us are made up of trials; none, save ourselves, can feel them; few, save ourselves, can see, or will believe in them. Many a governess, tossed and turned about in the world's tempest, weary of her daily task, sick of its monotony, is tempted, no doubt, to say, 'Oh

that I were established as the Demoiselles Barlieu are, with a home and school of my own !' But I can tell you, Anne, that often and often I and my sister envy the lot of the poorest governess out on her own account, because she is free from anxiety."

She spoke truly. Every individual lot has its peculiar trials, and none can mitigate them. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." I walked on by her side then, in my young inexperience, wondering whether *all* people had these trials, whether they would come to me. It was my morning of life, when the unseen future looks as a bright and flowery dream. Mademoiselle Annette broke the silence.

"You will never forget, my dear, that you have a friend in us. Should you meet with any trouble, should you be at any time out of a situation, come to us; our house is open to you."

"Thank you, thank you, dear Mademoiselle Annette," I replied, grasping her hand. "I will try and do brave battle with the world's cares; I have not forgotten my mother's lessons."

“Anne,” she gravely responded, “do not *battle*: rather welcome them.”

Well, I was engaged. And, as the Demoiselles Barlieu observed, it was not altogether like my entering the house of people entirely strange, for they were acquainted with the family of Mr. Paler: himself they had never before seen, but two of his sisters had been educated in their establishment.

A week or two after the Palers had settled themselves in Paris, I was escorted thither by a friend of the Miss Barlieus. The address given me was Avenue de St. Cloud, Commune de Passy. We found it a good-looking, commodious house, and my travelling protector, Madame Bernadotte, left me at the door. A young girl came forward as I was shown into a room.

“Are you Miss Hereford, the new governess?”

“Yes. I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you at Nulle,” I answered, holding out my hand to her.

“That I’m sure you’ve not. I never was at Nulle. It was Kate and Harriet who went there

with papa and mamma. I and Fanny and Grace came straight here last week from England, with nurse."

Now, strange to say, it had never occurred to me or to the Miss Barlieus to ask Mrs. Paler, during the negotiations, how many pupils I should have. Two children were with them at Nulle, Kate and Harriet, and I never supposed that there were others; I believed these would be my only pupils.

"How many are you, my dear?"

"Oh, we are five."

"Am I to teach you all?"

"Of course. There's nobody else to teach us. And we have two little brothers, but they are quite in the nursery."

Had Mrs. Paler purposely concealed the number? or had it been the result of inadvertence? The thought that came over me was, that were I engaging a governess for five pupils, I should take care to mention that there were five. They came flocking round me now, every one of them, high-spirited, romping girls, impatient of control, their ages varying from six to twelve.

“Mamma and papa are out, but I don’t suppose they’ll be long. Do you want to see mamma?”

“I shall be glad to see her.”

“Do you wish for anything to eat?” inquired Miss Paler. “You can have what you like: dinner or tea; you have only to ring and order it. We have dined and had tea also. Mamma has not; but you don’t take your meals with her.”

As she spoke, some noise was heard in the house, and they all ran out. It proved to be Mrs. Paler. She went up to her own sitting-room, and thither I was summoned.

“So you have got here safely, Miss Hereford?” was her salutation, spoken cordially enough. But she did not offer to shake hands with me.

“I have been making acquaintance with my pupils, madam. I did not know there were so many.”

“Did you not? Oh, you forget; I have no doubt I mentioned it.”

“I think not. I believed that the two Miss Palers I saw at Nulle were your only children.”

"My only children! Good gracious, Miss Hereford, what an idea! Why, I have seven! and have lost two, which made nine, and shall have more yet, for all I know. You will take the five girls; five are as easily taught as two."

I did not dispute the words. I had come, intending and hoping to do my duty to the very utmost extent, whether it might be much or little. Though certainly the five pupils did look formidable in prospective, considering that I should have to teach them everything, singing excepted.

"I hope you will suit me," went on Mrs. Paler. "I have had many qualms of doubt since I engaged you. But I can't beat them into Mr. Paler; he turns round, and politely tells me they are 'rubbish,' as any heathen might."

"Qualms of doubt as to my being but nineteen, or to my skill in music?" I asked.

"Neither; your age I never made an objection, and I dare say your music will do very well for the present. Here's Mr. Paler."

He came in, the same apparently shy, silent,

portly man as at Nulle, in his gold spectacles. But he came up kindly to me, and shook hands.

“My doubts turn upon serious points, Miss Hereford,” pursued Mrs. Paler. “If I thought you would undermine the faith of my children and imbue them with Roman Catholic doctrines——”

“Mrs. Paler!” I interrupted in surprise. “I told you I was a Protestant, brought up strictly in the tenets of the Church of England. Your children are of the same faith: there is little fear, then, that I should seek to undermine it. I know of none better in the world.”

“You must excuse my anxiety, Miss Hereford. Can you conscientiously assure me that you hate all Roman Catholics?”

I looked at her in amazement. And she looked at me, waiting for my answer. A smile, unless I mistook, crossed the lips of Mr. Paler.

“Oh, Mrs. Paler, what would my own religion be worth if I could hate? Believe me there are excellent Christians amidst the Roman Catholics, as there are amidst us. People who are striving to do their duty in this world, living and working

on for the next. Look at the Miss Barlieus ! I love them dearly ; every one respects them : but I would not change my religion for theirs.”

“It is the fact of your having spent four years in their house that makes me doubtful. But I think I can trust you ; you look so sincere and true. The alarming number of converts to Romanism which we have of late years been obliged to witness, must make us all fearful.”

“Perverts, if you please,” interrupted Mr. Paler. “When I hear of our folks going over to the Romish faith, I always suspect they are those who have not done their duty in their own. A man may find all he wants in his own religion, if he only looks out for it.”

“Oh, that’s very true,” I exclaimed, my eyes sparkling, glad, somehow, to hear him say it. “It is what I have been trying to express to Mrs. Paler.”

“She has got her head full of some nonsensical fear that her children should be turned into Roman Catholics—I suppose because we are in a Catholic country,” he resumed, looking at his wife through his glasses. “She’ll talk about it

till she turns into one herself, if she doesn't mind ; that's the way the mania begins. There's no more fear of sensible people turning Catholics than there is of my turning Dutchman : as to the children, the notion is simply absurd. And what sort of weather have you had at Nulle, Miss Hereford, since we left it?"

"Not very fine. Yesterday it poured with rain all day."

"Ah. That would make it pleasant for travelling, though."

"Yes : it laid the dust."

"Did you travel alone?"

"Oh, no ; the Miss Barlieus would not have allowed it. It is not etiquette in France for a young lady to go out even for a walk alone. An acquaintance of the Miss Barlieus, Madame Bernadotte, who was journeying to Paris, accompanied me."

"Well, I hope you will be comfortable here," he concluded.

"Thank you ; I hope so."

"And look here, I'll give you a hint. Just you get the upper hand of those children at once,

or you'll never do it. They are like so many untrained colts."

Nothing more was said. I had not been asked to sit, and supposed the silence was a hint that I must quit the room. Before I had got far, a servant came and said I was to go back to it. Mrs. Paler was alone then, looking very solemn and dark.

"Miss Hereford, you have been reared in seclusion, mostly in school, and probably know little of the conveniences—the exactions of social life. Do not be offended if I set you right upon a point—I have no doubt you have erred, not from want of respect, but from lack of knowledge."

What had I done? of course I said I should be obliged to her to set me right in anything when found wrong.

"You are a governess; you hold a dependent situation in my house. Is it not so?"

"Certainly it is," I answered, wondering much.

"Then never forget that a certain amount of respect in manner is due to myself and to Mr. Paler. I do not, of course, wish to exact the

deference a servant would give—you must understand that ; but there's a medium : a medium, Miss Hereford. To you, I and Mr. Paler are ' madam ' and ' sir,' and I beg that we may be always addressed as such."

I curtsied and turned away, the burning colour dyeing my face. It was my first lesson in dependence. But Mrs. Paler was right ; and I felt vexed to have forgotten that I was only a governess. Misplaced rebellion rose in my heart, whispering that I was a lady born ; that my family was far higher in the social world than Mr. or Mrs. Paler's ; whispering, moreover, that that lady was not a gentlewoman, and never could be one. But after a few minutes spent in sober reflection, common sense chased away my foolish thoughts, leaving in place a firm resolution never so to transgress again. From that hour, I took up my position bravely—the yielding, dependent, submissive governess.

But what a life of toil I entered upon ! and—where were my dreams of Paris ? Have you forgotten that they had visited me, in all their

beautiful delusion? I had not. Delusive hopes are always the sweetest.

When I had stayed three months at Mrs. Paler's I had never once been into Paris further than the Champs Elysées. Save that we went every Sunday morning in a closed carriage to the Ambassador's chapel, I saw nothing of Paris. The streets may have been of crystal, the fountains of malachite marble, the houses of burnished gold, for all I witnessed of them—and I believe my warm imagination had pictured something of the like resplendence. There was no pleasure for me; no going out; my days were one lasting scene of toil.

I am not going to complain unjustly of Mrs. Paler's situation, or make it out worse than it was. It has become much the fashion of late years—I may say a mania—to set forth the sorrows and ill-treatment that governesses have to endure: were the other side of the question to be taken up, it might be seen that ladies have as much to bear from governesses. There are good places and there are bad ones; and there are admirable governesses, as well as undesirable and

most incapable ones : perhaps the good and bad, on both sides are about balanced. I was well-treated at Mr. Paler's ; I had a generous diet, and a maid to wait upon me in conjunction with the two elder girls. When they had visitors in an evening, I was admitted on an equality (at any rate to appearance) ; I had respect paid me by the servants ; and I was not found fault with by Mr. and Mrs. Paler. Could I desire better than this ? No. But I was overworked.

Put it to yourselves what it was, if you have any experience in teaching. Five girls, all in different stages of advancement, to learn everything, from German and good English down to needle-work. The worst task was the music ; the drawing lessons I could give conjointly. All five learnt it, piano and harp, and two of them, the second and the youngest but one, were so wild and unsteady that they could not be trusted to practise one instant alone. I rose every morning at half-past six to begin the music lessons, and I was usually up until twelve or one o'clock the next morning correcting exercises, for I could not find time to do them during the day. " Make

time," says somebody. I could only have made it by neglecting the children.

"Our last governess never did a thing after six in the evening," Kate said to me one day. "You should not be so particular, Miss Hereford."

"But she did not get you on to your mamma's satisfaction."

"No, indeed: mamma sent her away because of that. She did not care whether we advanced or not. All she cared for was to get the studies over anyhow."

Just so: it had been eye-service, as I could have told by their ignorance when I took the girls in hand. My dear mother had enjoined me differently: "Whatever you undertake, Anne, let it be done to the very best of your ability: do it as to God; as though His eye and ear were ever present with you."

I appealed to Mrs. Paler: telling her I could not continue to work as I was doing, and asking what could be done.

"Oh, nonsense, Miss Hereford, you must be a bad economizer of time," she answered. "The

other governesses I have had did not complain of being overworked."

"But, madam, did they do their duty?"

"Middling for that—but then they were incorrigibly lazy. We are *quite* satisfied with you, Miss Hereford, and you must manage your time so as to afford yourself more leisure."

I suggested to Mrs. Paler that she should get help for part of the music lessons, but she would not hear of it; so I had to go on doing my best; but to do that best overtaxed my strength sadly. Mrs. Paler might have had more consideration: she saw that I rarely went out; one hurried walk in the week, perhaps, and the drive to church on Sunday. My pupils walked out every day, taken by one or other of the servants; but they did not go together: two or three stayed with me while the rest went, and when they came back to me these went. Mrs. Paler insisted upon my giving an hour of music to each child daily, which made five hours a day for music alone. The confinement and the hard work, perhaps the broken spirits, began to tell upon me; nervous headaches came on, and I wrote

to the Miss Barlieus, asking what I should do. I wrote the letter on a Sunday, I am sorry to say, failing time on a week day. None of us went abroad on a Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Paler protested that nothing but sin and gallavantiing was to be seen out of doors on a French Sunday; and once home from church we were shut up for the rest of the day. She did not go out herself, or suffer anybody else to go; Mr. Paler excepted. He took the reins into his own hands.

The Miss Barlieus answered me sensibly; it was Miss Annette who wrote. "Put up with it to the close of your year from the time of entrance," she said. "It is never well for a governess to leave her situation before the year is up, if it can be avoided; and were you to do so, some ladies might urge it as an objection to making another engagement with you. You are but young still. Give Mrs. Paler ample notice, three months, we believe, is the English usage—and endeavour to part with her amicably. She must see that her situation is beyond your strength."

I took the advice, and in June gave Mrs. Paler

warning to leave, having entered her house in September. She was angry, and affected to believe I would not go. I respectfully asked her to put herself in idea in my place, and candidly say whether or not the work was too hard. She muttered something about "over-conscientiousness;" that I should get along better without it. Nothing more was said; nothing satisfactory decided, and the time went on again to the approach of September. I wondered how I must set about looking out for another asylum; I had no time to look out, no opportunity to go abroad. Mr. Paler was in England.

"Miss Hereford, mamma told me to say that we shall be expected in the drawing-room to-night; you, and I, and Harriet," observed Kate Paler to me one hot summer's day. "The Gerdons are coming and the De Mellissies."

"What De Mellissies are those?" I inquired, the name striking upon my ear with a thrill of remembrance.

"What De Mellissies are those? why, the De Mellissies," returned Kate, girl-fashion. "She is young and very pretty; I saw her when I

was out with mamma in the carriage the other day."

"Is she English or French?"

"English, I'll vow. No French tongue could speak English as she does."

"When you answer in that free, abrupt manner, Kate, you greatly displease me," I interposed. "It is most unladylike."

Kate laughed; said she was free-spoken by nature, and it was of no use trying to be otherwise. By habit more than by nature, I told her: and I waited with impatience for the evening.

It was Emily. I knew her at once. Gay-mannered, laughing, lovely as ever, she came into the room on her husband's arm, wearing a pink silk dress and wreath of roses. Alfred de Mellissie looked ill; at least he was paler and thinner than in the old days at Nulle. She either did not or would not remember me; as the evening drew on, I felt sure that she did not, for she spoke cordially enough to me, though as to an utter stranger. It happened that we were quite alone once, in the recess of a window, and I interrupted what she was saying about a song.

“Have you quite forgotten me, Madame de Mellissie?”

“Forgotten you!” she returned, with a quick glance. “I never knew you, did I?”

“In the years gone by, when you were Miss Chandos. I am Anne Hereford.”

A puzzled gaze at me, and then she hid her face in her hands, its penitent expression mixed with laughter. “Never say a word about that naughty time, if you love me! everybody says it should be buried five fathoms deep. I ought to have known you, though, for it is the same gentle face; the sweet and steady eyes, with the long eyelashes, and the honest good sense and the pretty smile. But you have grown out of all knowledge. Not that you are much of a size now. What an escapade that was! the staid Demoiselles Barlieu will never get over it. I shall go and beg their pardon in person some day. Were you shocked at it?”

“Yes. But has it brought you happiness?”

“Who talks of happiness at soirées? You must be as unsophisticated as ever, Anne Hereford. Has that Johnstone left?”

“ A long, long while ago. She was dismissed at the end of a few months. The Miss Barlieus did not like her.”

“ I don’t know who could like her. And so you are a governess ?”

“ Yes,” I bravely avowed. “ I have been nearly a year with the Miss Palers.”

“ You must get leave to come and see me. Alfred, here’s an old schoolfellow of mine. I dare say you will remember her.”

M. de Mellissie came at the call, and was talking to me for the rest of the evening.

The great things that a night may bring forth !
The sadness that the rising of another sun may
be bearing to us on its hot wings !

It was the morning following the soirée. I was in the schoolroom with the girls, but quitted it for a minute to read a letter in peace that arrived by the early post. It was written by Miss Barlieu. A very kind letter, telling me to go back to them while I looked out for a fresh situation, should I not get one before leaving Mrs. Paler. Suddenly the door opened, and Mrs .

Paler came in without any ceremony of knocking, her face white, and an open letter in her hand. She looked scared, fierce ; agitation impeding her free utterance.

“ Here’s news !” she brought out at length, her voice rising to a scream ; “ here’s news to come upon me like a thunderbolt ! Does he expect me to live through it ?”

“ Oh, Mrs. Paler, what has happened ? You look ill and terrified. You have had bad tidings ! Will you not tell them to me ?”

“ What else have I come for but to tell you ?” she retorted, speaking in a tone that betrayed as much anger as distress. “ I went to the study after you, and frightened the girls ; they were for following me here, so I locked them in. I must tell some one, or my feelings will burst bounds ; they always were of a demonstrative nature. Not like *his*, the sly, quiet fox !”

My fears flew to Mr. Paler. He had been in England some time now, ever since the middle of May. Though I did not understand her anger, or the last words.

“ You have heard from Mr. Paler, madam !”

I uttered. "Some harm has happened to him !"

"Harm ! yes, it has. Harm to me and my children, though, more than to him. Miss Hereford, he has just gone and ruined himself."

"How ?" I asked, feeling grieved and puzzled.

"It was always his mania, that turf-gambling, and as a young man he got out of thousands at it. I thought how it would be—I declare I did—when he became restless here in Paris, just before the Epsom Meeting, and at last went off to it. 'You'll drop some hundreds over it, if you do go,' I said to him. 'Not I,' was his retort, 'since I have had children to drop hundreds over, I don't spare them for race-horses.' A wicked, reckless man !"

"And has he—dropped the hundreds, madam ?"

"Hundreds !" she shrieked ; and then, looking covertly around the roof, as if fearful others might be listening, she sunk her voice to a whisper : "He has lost thirty thousand pounds."

"Oh !" I exclaimed, in my horror. Mrs. Paler wrung her hands.

"Thirty thousand pounds, every pound of it

—and I hope remorse will haunt him to his dying day ! Epsom, Ascot, Goodwood—I know not how many other courses he has visited this summer, and has betted frantically at all. The mania was upon him again, and he could not stop himself. He is lying ill now at Doncaster, at one of the inns there, and his brother writes ; he tells me they dare not conceal the facts from me any longer.”

“ Shall you not go over to him, madam ? ”

“ I go over to him ! ” she retorted ; “ I would not go to him if he were dying. But that my children are his, I would never live with him again ; I would never notice him : I would get a divorce, if practicable, but for their sakes. You look shocked, Miss Hereford ; but you, an unmarried girl, cannot realize the blow in all its extent. Do you think a man has any *right* wilfully to bring disgrace and misery upon his wife and children ? ”

“ Oh, madam—no ! ”

“ It is my punishment come home to me,” she wildly exclaimed. “ They told me how it would be, sooner or later, if I persisted in marry-

ing James Paler: but I would not listen to them. My mother and sisters will say it serves me right."

I heard the children squealing and kicking at the school-room door, and did not dare to go to them.

"It is next door to ruin," said Mrs. Paler; "it will take from us more than half our income; and present debt and embarrassment it must bring. Ah! see how some things—trifles—happen sometimes for the best! I thought it a great misfortune to lose you, but I am glad of it now, for I am sure I can no longer afford an expensive governess. Nor many servants, either. Oh, woe's me!"

I stood looking at her distress with great pity, feeling that Mr. Paler must be next kin to a madman. And yet I had liked him: he was most affectionate to his children, and solicitous for the comfort of his household. Mrs. Paler seemed to become suddenly awake to the uproar. She darted to the school-room, scolded one, boxed another, locked the door upon them again, and came back to me.

"I had better settle things with you at once, Miss Hereford. If I take it in my head, I may go off to my family in England at a minute's notice; there's no knowing. Your time here will expire in a fortnight?"

"Yes."

"I had intended to offer an increased salary, if you would stay on—but that's all out of the question now. I suppose you have no settled plans; no fresh situation to go to?"

"Madam, it has not been in my power to look out for one."

"True. Yet it is better that you should go. I don't know what may become of us in future: where we shall live, or what we shall do—perhaps go to some obscure place in Germany, or Scotland, or Wales, and economize: anywhere, that it's cheap. I wonder that such men, who deliberately bring ruin on their families, are permitted to live! But now we must try and find you another situation."

"Perhaps Madame de Mellissie may know of something: and I think she would interest herself for me, if I knew how to see her."

“You can go and see her,” replied Mrs. Paler, “you can go to-day, and call upon her. My maid shall take you. Never mind the studies : I feel as if I should not care if the girls never learnt anything again — with this blow upon them.”

I did not wait for a second permission : the thought that Emily de Mellissie might help me to a fresh situation had been floating in my mind all night. She was well-connected in England ; she was in the best society in Paris ; and she was good-natured.

In the afternoon I proceeded to the hotel (as it was called) of old Madame de Mellissie, for it was her house, and her son and daughter-in-law lived with her. Emily was at home, surrounded by morning callers, quite a crowd of them. She looked intensely surprised at seeing me ; was, or I fancied it, rather distant and haughty in manner ; and, pointing to a chair, desired me to wait. Did she deem I had presumptuously intruded *as* one of those morning callers ? Very humbly I waited until the last had gone : schooling myself to remember that I was but a poor governess, while

she was Madame Alfred de Mellissie, *née* Miss Chandos of Chandos.

"And so you have soon come to pay me a visit, Miss Hereford!"

"I have come as a petitioner, rather than as a visitor, Madame de Mellissie. Can you spare me five minutes?"

"I can spare you ten if you like, now those loungers are gone."

I forthwith told my tale. That I was leaving Mrs. Paler's, where I was overworked: that I had thought it possible she might know of some situation open: if so, would she kindly recommend me?"

"The idea, Anne Hereford, of your coming to me upon such an errand!" was her laughing answer. "As if I troubled myself about vacant situations! There is a rumour current in Paris this morning that James Paler has been idiot enough to go and ruin himself on the turf. That he has lost a great deal of money is certain, for the newspapers allude to it in a manner not to be mistaken. Thank goodness, Alfred has no weakness that way, though he is empty-headed

enough. Is it not a dreadful life, that of a governess?"

"At Mrs. Paler's it has been one of incessant toil. I hope to go where the duties will be lighter. It is not the life I like, or would have chosen; but I must bend to circumstances."

"That's true enough. I will ask all my friends in Paris if they——by the way," she abruptly broke off, speaking with slow deliberation, "I wonder whether—if you should be found suitable——whether you would like something else?"

I made no reply; only waited for her to explain herself.

"The case is this, Miss Hereford," she resumed, assuming a light manner. "I thought of going to Chandos on a visit; my husband was to have conducted me thither, but Madame de Mellissie has been ailing, and Alfred says it would not do for him to leave her. This morning we had a dispute over it. 'There's nothing much amiss with her,' I said: 'were she in danger, it would be a different matter, but it's quite unreasonable to keep me away from Chandos for nothing but this.' Monsieur Alfred grew vexed,

said he should not quit her, and moreover did not, himself, feel well enough to travel,—for he has a sort of French fever hanging over him. They are always getting it, you know. I am sick of hearing one say to another, ‘*J’ai la fièvre aujourd’hui !*’ Then I said I should go without him : ‘*With great pleasure,*’ he complacently replied, provided I would engage a lady as companion, but he should not trust me alone. Complimentary to my discretion, was it not ?”

I could not deny it—in a certain sense.

“But the bargain was made ; it was indeed. I am to look out for a companion, and then I may be off the next hour to England, destination Chandos. Would you like to take the place ?”

A thousand thoughts flew over me at the abrupt question, crowding my mind, dyeing my cheeks. The prospect, at the first glance, appeared like a haven of rest after Mrs. Paler’s. But—what would be my duties?—and was *I*, a comparative child, fit for the post ? Should I be deemed fit by Monsieur de Mellissie ?

“What should I have to do ?” I asked.

“Anything I please,” she answered. “You

must amuse me when I am tired, read to me when I feel inclined to listen, play to me when I wish, be ready to go out when I want you, give orders to my maid for me, write my letters when I am too idle to do it, and post yourself at my side to play propriety between this and Chandos. Those are the onerous duties of a dame de compagnie, are they not? but I have no experience in the matter. Could you undertake them?"

She spoke all this curiously, in a haughty tone, but with a smile on her face. I did not know how to take it. "Are you speaking seriously, Madame de Mellissie?"

"Of course I am. Stay, though. About the payment? I could not afford to give much, for my purse has a hole at both ends of it, and I am dreadfully poor. I suppose you have had a high salary at Mrs. Paler's?"

"Sixty guineas."

"Oh, don't talk of it!" she exclaimed, stopping her ears. "I wish I could give it; but I never could squeeze out more than twenty. Anne, I will make a bargain with you: go with me to Chandos, stay with me during my visit

there; it will not last above a week or two; and when we return here, I will get you a more lucrative situation. For the time you are with me, I will give you what I can afford, and of course pay your travelling expenses!"

With the word "Anne," she had gone back to the old familiar manner of our school-days. I accepted the offer willingly, subject, of course, to the approval of Monsieur de Mellissie; and feeling very doubtful in my own mind whether it would be carried out. As to the payment—what she said seemed reasonable enough, and money wore but little value in my eyes: I had not then found out its uses. Provided I had enough for my ordinary wants of dress, it was all I cared for; and a large sum was due to me from Mrs. Paler.

Somewhat to my surprise, M. de Mellissie approved of me as his wife's companion, paying me a compliment on the occasion. "You are young, Mademoiselle Hereford, but I can see you are one fully to be trusted: I confide my wife to you."

"I will do what I can, sir."

"You laugh at my saying that thing," he said, speaking in his sometimes rather odd English. "You think my wife can better take care of you, than you of her."

"I am younger than she is."

"That goes without telling, mademoiselle. You look it. The case is this," he added, in a confidential tone. "It is not that my wife wants protection on her journey; she has her *femme de chambre*; but because I do not think they would like to see her arrive alone at Chandos. My lady is difficile."

The permission to depart accorded, Madame de Mellissie was all impatience to set off. I bought a dress or two, but she would not allow me time to get them made, and I had to take them unmade. Though I was going to Chandos as a humble companion, I could not forget that my birth would have entitled me to go as a visitor, and wished to dress accordingly.

The foolish girl that I was! I spent my money down to one Napoleon and some silver; it was not very much I had by me; and then Mrs. Paler, to my intense consternation,

told me it was not convenient to pay me my salary.

She owed me thirty guineas. I had received the first thirty at the termination of the half-year : it was all spent, including what I had laid out now. I appealed to Mrs. Paler's good feeling, showing my needy state. In return she appealed to mine.

"My dear Miss Hereford, I have not got it. Until remittances shall reach me from Mr. Paler, I am very short. You do not require money for your journey, Madame Alfred de Mellissie pays all that, and I will remit it to you ere you have been many days at Chandos. You will not, I am sure, object so far to oblige a poor distressed woman."

What answer could I give ?

On a lovely September morning we started for Boulogne-sur-Mer, Madame Alfred de Mellissie, I, and her maid Pauline. M. de Mellissie saw us off at the station.

"I would have run down to Boulogne to put you on board the boat, but that I do not feel well enough ; my fever is very bad to-day," he

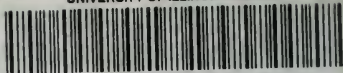
said to me and his wife. She took no notice of the words, but I saw they were true: his pale thin face had a hectic red upon it, his hand, meeting mine in the adieu, burnt me through my glove.

“Madame de Mellissie, your husband certainly has an attack of fever,” I said, as the train started.

“Ah, yes, no doubt; the French, as I previously observed, are subject to it. But it never comes to anything.”

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